

October 26, 2020

Dear Mayor Tory and City Councillors,

Regarding Ex.17.1 - Towards Recovery and Building a Renewed Toronto

In April 2020, local organizations, representing tens of thousands of people from across the city submitted a letter to the Mayor and City Council that outlined ten principles for a bold, green, and just recovery.

The letter called for City Council to be bold and seize this historic moment to create a new future for our city as part of any COVID-19 recovery and rebuilding package — a future that leaves no one behind. The letter also asked City Council to commit to powerfully advocate for Toronto, in a push united with civil society, at the Federal and Provincial levels to secure a New Deal for our city to help us in this rebuilding.

Earlier this month, the City Manager and Toronto Office of Recovery and Rebuild (TORR) Report was released highlighting 83 recommendations. While the report includes some good recommendations, it is not an action plan. Council needs to set the vision, guiding principles, and a set of clear priorities to guide the City and provide tangible commitments, goals, timelines and budgets for implementation.

At a time when we are looking for bold and immediate action, there is a significant risk that Toronto's recovery promises more of the status quo. The approach relies on the same strategies that have exacerbated economic, social and health disparities for Black, Indigenous and People of Colour.

Our recovery must, and can be so much more. The COVID-19 pandemic has deepened many inequities, exposed them as public health risks, and shown that their burden is felt most acutely by people experiencing poverty, low-paid frontline workers, women, and Black, Indigenous, racialized, newcomer and LGBTQ2S+ communities, people with disabilities, and seniors - especially those who hold intersecting positions. Those who were already most vulnerable in Toronto are the very people most impacted by emergencies like COVID-19 and most likely to be left behind in the recovery, including those living in COVID hot spots such as north-west Toronto.

We want to support efforts to build a more equitable, resilient, sustainable, healthy and engaged city. We need the city to lead and move us towards a new future based on these and the ten core principles we set out in our [April 29 letter](#) for a bold, green, and just recovery for Toronto:

1. For best results, ensure the recovery and rebuilding process is transparent and community-led

2. Make evidence-based decisions, informed by disaggregated race-based and sociodemographic data collection
3. Advocate immediately and powerfully to secure a New Deal for Toronto from our Federal and Provincial Governments
4. Fast-track and improve Toronto's existing strategies, plans, and commitments in Toronto's recovery and rebuilding plans, in order to build a more equitable, healthy and climate-resilient city
5. Invest in, protect, and centre workers in recovery and rebuilding plans
6. Prioritize low-carbon infrastructure, social procurement, and equitable local job creation through Community Benefits Agreements
7. Invest in public and community ownership of land and housing to ensure everyone is permanently housed, local food production is increased, and jobs are created
8. Support and sustain the community infrastructure that has developed in response to COVID-19 for ongoing response and recovery work
9. Encourage and prioritize community support and discontinue programs that increase surveillance and harm social cohesion and solidarity
10. Make permanent and expand the public supports and services that have been put in place to respond to this pandemic, rather than cutting services

We don't want a rebuild of what we were. This will require some tough decisions from our municipal leaders about priorities and it will require serious negotiation with other levels of government to address long-standing issues of municipal finance and authority.

But we can't afford to wait for change. Our communities, including families and businesses, are suffering. We need actions in the short term as well as change over the medium term - we want to see clear principles and actions that move us towards a collective vision and contribute to real system change.

We will continue to advocate for real change and a new vision for Toronto grounded in a strong inclusive and equitable foundation. We will support you in your efforts to lead us to that vision and will continue to identify and push for alternatives when actions reinforce the old ways.

We call on City Council and the Mayor to first make positive decisions that reflect what you are hearing from Torontonians and civil society about what is needed. Then, we call on the City to lead civil society in getting money and tools – the new deal – needed to implement these decisions, through our mutual connections with Torontonians and communities. If they see themselves reflected in the recovery and renewal plans, Toronto residents can play a crucial role in demanding more and better of our Federal and Provincial governments. Let's harness that power.

Please see the following page for the list of organizations signing this letter.

Yours truly,

Good Jobs For All Coalition
Progress Toronto
Social Planning Toronto
Toronto & York Region Labour Council
Toronto Neighbourhood Centres
Toronto Environmental Alliance
TTCriders
Toronto Youth Cabinet
Toronto ACORN
Toronto Community Benefits Network
Urban Alliance on Race Relations

