



LONDON YOUTH ADVISORY COUNCIL

A Budget Submission from the London Youth Advisory Council (LYAC)

Why make a budget submission?

The London Youth Advisory Council believes in rethinking government, but we also believe in engaging with formal institutions. We want you to read what we have to say, but more importantly, we want you to think about the young people who do not participate in these processes because they feel excluded from government, politics, and society.

What is the London Youth Advisory Council?

The London Youth Advisory Council (LYAC) exists to reboot citizenship, starting with young people in the City of London. The LYAC encourages young people to engage in critical conversations about the choices that societies and governments make. We encourage young people to dream big; to try, fail, and try again; and to rewrite the rules of their worlds.

What is going on at the London Youth Advisory Council?

This year the LYAC has tackled conversations about policing, drug policy, education, arts funding, citizenship engagement, individual environmentalism, placemaking, downtown redevelopment, youth unemployment, and transit. We've spoke about these issues at our weekly meetings and have gone out into the community to meet with other groups of young people. We don't represent all of London's young people yet, but we're doing our best to get to know as many of them as possible.

This submission reflects the thoughts and ideas of the LYAC's 14 Youth Ward Councillors and is informed by the representative work that we have done in the London community this year. We want to make sure that you understand that we don't speak for all of London's young people because there are a lot of us! Youth opinion across London is as diverse as adult opinion so we all have to be careful about thinking that we understand any singular 'youth' perspective.

With that said, we have chosen to focus on three priorities for this submission:

1. Engaging with Education Systems
2. Investing in London's Rapid Transit System
3. Investing in Participatory Democracy

We know that you are late in your budget process, so we have tried to make suggestions that allow you to think about how to direct resources that are already allocated in your budget. Thank you for

taking the time to think about our ideas, and to think critically about how to engage young people in the budget process.

Sincerely,

The 2014/15 London Youth Advisory Council:

Ward 1 - Cedric Richards
Ward 2 - Ashley Veri
Ward 3 - Meaghan Bennett
Ward 4 - Nicole Worozbyt
Ward 5 - Charles Muriithi
Ward 6 - Shehan Wijeyagoonewardane
Ward 7 - Melissa Zuleta Jiménez
Ward 8 - Scott Wilkinson
Ward 9 - Ali Alkadhimi
Ward 10 - Anooshae Janmohammad
Ward 11 - Cameron Arksey
Ward 12 - Wadhah Baobaid
Ward 13 - Olivia Smith Rodrigues
Ward 14 - Jess Muller

Budget Priority 1: *Engaging with Education Systems*

We think that...

Elementary, secondary, and postsecondary students should have frequent contact with City Council and the Mayor.

We are thinking about this because...

There is a barrier between political institutions and the everyday life of students. This barrier perpetuates the decline in youth participation in formal politics. Students often feel disconnected from local politicians because few interactions occur between them. By increasing opportunities for meeting politicians and the exchanging of stories with each other, students will feel that their voice is valued, they will be more likely to participate in formal civic matters like voting, and they will be inspired to create positive change in London. Engaging with students benefits politicians because it exposes them to unique perspectives, provides a connection with future and current voters, and develops community ties that encourage students to remain in London.

The City of London should...

City Council and the Mayor should invest time and existing engagement resources into reaching out to students at elementary, secondary, and postsecondary schools.

Collaborate with the school boards, Fanshawe, Western, and the career colleges to arrange for city councillors and the mayor to spend time with students in their schools

- **For example:** Speak to students about their experience as a politician; host “Question and Answer” sessions in classrooms; participate in focus groups with students on municipal matters

Budget Priority 2: Investing in London's Rapid Transit

What think that...

The City of London should invest in a rapid transit system that will provide fast, reliable, and adaptable service to the citizens of London.

We are thinking about this because...

The growth of London, especially over the past 25 years, has created heavily car dependant city. Prior to this year, transit had never been a top priority for this city, resulting in ridership demand outgrowing the current transit system capacity. Transit has is not the first mobility option for the majority of citizens and many riders expect London Transit to be slow and unreliable. In London, an average transit trip takes 4 to 8 times longer than driving. We believe that providing safe, reliable and affordable mobility options is essential to London's future.

The City of London should...

Invest money in *Shift* to ensure that youth perspectives are captured throughout the discussion, planning and implementation phases. Young people have unique beliefs and needs. It is important that all youth demographics are consulted because they will be the core riders of any future system.

Invest in education programs to teach young people about the different types of rapid transit and the costs and benefits of each. These education processes will empower youth to think about the future of London and help them to provide informed input about what the city should look like.

Continue to invest in a transit planning strategy that keeps our options open. Whether the City decides to have a Bus Rapid Transit, Light Rail Transit or a hybrid system, any new transportation infrastructure must be adaptable to changing community needs and wants.

Encourage the LTC to invest in a rapid transit pilot project to test the viability of a dedicated late night loop from Western to Downtown and Fanshawe to Downtown on Friday and Saturday nights. These routes will help to get students home safely at night and will help to address the concerns of local business owners who struggle with the impacts of late-night congestion on downtown streets. Other cities with colleges and universities have implemented these initiatives and have achieved significant success.

Budget Priority 3: *Investing in Participatory Democracy*

What think that...

All citizens of London should have the right to directly participate in decisions made about their city.

We are thinking about this because...

Many of our constituent do not believe that government is listening to them. We should celebrate 2014's 43% voter turnout, but make sure to remember that 57% of Londoners did not cast a vote. In our opinion, these Londoners are not apathetic. With some exceptions, we believe them to be people who are deeply discouraged by institutions of government that have been unwilling to fundamentally change the way that they operate.

In London, attempts to engage residents have been admirable, even inspiring, but we think that deep institutional change is necessary to rebuild the trust of Londoners who feel like City Council is not listening to them.

The City of London should...

Direct existing resources to the research, design, and implementation of a participatory budgeting pilot project. The pilot project should aspire to convert London's current Build a Budget process into a true, citizen-led participatory budgeting process.