

## **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 give young people space 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; to consider new perspectives and 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, the London Plan, city development, income inequality, and transit. We've spoken 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 discussed during the LYAC's Youth Councillors' February 18th meeting, 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 four priorities for this submission:

- 1. Investing in Relationships Between Community and Police**
- 2. Consulting Different Viewpoints on Rapid Transit**
- 3. Investing in Youth Spaces**
- 4. Investing in the Back to the River Project Without the Springbank Dam**

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 2015/16 London Youth Advisory Council:

Ward 1 - Cedric Richards  
Ward 2 - Ranyah Suleiman  
Ward 3 - Asala Aladl  
Ward 4 - Nicole Worozbyt  
Ward 5 - Elizabeth Muriithi  
Ward 6 - Joyce Lee  
Ward 7 - Jana Kayssi  
Ward 8 - Ghadeir Madlol  
Ward 9 - Maia Harris  
Ward 10 - Violette Hammad  
Ward 11 - Skylar Franke  
Ward 12 - Hanein Madlol  
Ward 13 - Evan Wiebe  
Ward 14 - Brandon Dickson  
Western University Councillor - Kyle Sholes

## **Budget Priority 1: *Investing in Relationships Between Community and Police***

### **We think that...**

The community benefits when police officers and citizens have a strong, trusting relationship with one another.

### **We are thinking about this because...**

We've had multiple discussions about carding and policing this year, particularly regarding how the police should develop quality relationships with community members. The councillors don't believe the carding is an effective way to do this, and instead suggest methods that involve regular and casual interaction between police and citizens. This would allow for less miscommunication and give community members space to give feedback to the police.

The London Police Service is already participating in community engagement by going to community events and having police officers in high schools. One thing to consider is that a number of councillors said that while they have police officers in their high schools, that positive relationship hasn't changed the way they view police officers in their daily lives. For this reason, developing community-based strategies that all police officers are expected to use would be an effective way of dealing with this gap.

### **The City of London should...**

Dedicate money from the assessment growth fund to develop a pilot program that integrates community engagement practices into the work of all police officers. This program should be developed in partnership between the London Police Service and the Community/London Police Service Collaboration and Partnership Working Group. It should also be evaluated on a dedicated page in the annual police budget report.

Some of the community engagement practices would involve holding consistent community discussions, attending community events, visiting schools, joining in volunteer efforts, and chatting casually with residents when they are in the area. For example:

- Police officers who walk the beat should be given a budget to buy people in the community coffee.
- One participant said that when he was a teenager, a police officer made a point of giving him their personal business card and said to call them any time he needed help. This made a big impression on him, and could be a strategy that police officers use regularly.

### **Budget Priority 2: *Consulting Different Viewpoints on Rapid Transit***

#### **We think that...**

We think that it is important for Londoners to be further consulted about the design of rapid transit, particularly individuals who are not LTC riders or who have limited access to transit.

#### **We are thinking about this because...**

Transit has been a major discussion throughout the councillors' term, and despite talking about it for nine months, the councillors haven't come to any clear conclusion about how to approach it. The councillors agree that London has a problem with transit, but have a number of different concerns about how to resolve it: some councillors are concerned about the expense, others would be unaffected by rapid transit because they don't live close to rapid transit lines, and others enthusiastically support it. This lack of consensus amongst the councillors made them wonder how City Council came to a unanimous decision regarding the hybrid BRT proposal, as it seems like the city itself does not have such a clear opinion.

### **The City of London should...**

- Dedicate a part of the Shift budget to conducting more community consultations with groups who have concerns about the proposed Rapid Transit plan, including citizens who do not live in areas on the Rapid transit lines

- Within Shift, invest in more professionally facilitated community conversations, such as the recent work commissioned by the City's Environmental Programs and Solid Waste department to consult young people about the environment and transit. These kinds of consultations ensure that people do not usually participate in community consultations are heard and understood.
- Continue to consider the other options that have been laid out by Shift. There are solutions present that could better address concerns that certain Londoners have, for instance, issues regarding high costs and low ridership
- Consider how to improve LTC currently, including improving accessibility for areas like Clarke Road and having more frequent bus times.
  - One participant mentioned that they have been impressed by the new express bus routes, which have infrequent stops. This allows for short ride times and gives better alternative for long-distance LTC riders, and is a great example of how the current transit network can continue to improve.

### **Budget Priority 3: *Investing in Youth Spaces***

#### **We think that...**

Community spaces better serve young people when they lead youth programming and development decisions.

#### **We are thinking about this because...**

One of the most common issues that the youth councillors hear from their constituents about is a lack of spaces for young people in London. Community centres, public parks, and libraries are doing great work to engage people in the city, but we often forget that spaces that are community hubs for others are not always community hubs for youth. We've heard from young people that basketball courts, malls, and coffee shops are common places they like to hang out, but these places can be expensive or inaccessible at certain times of the year. The councillors emphasized the importance of working with young people directly to develop and expand community spaces that serve their needs. It's important to reach out to young people to ask for their expertise when developing youth programming, and to give them opportunities to explore their own ideas for how to improve their communities.

#### **The City of London should...**

Young people should be consulted in the Strengthening Neighbourhoods Strategy and encouraged to develop youth spaces through opportunities like the SPARKS grant.

- Allocate existing Strengthening Neighbourhoods Strategy staff time to conducting outreach with elementary and high school teachers to encourage youth to apply for SPARKS
- Dedicate a portion of SPARKS funding to youth organizations that already encourage young people to develop community projects, such as United Way's London Life Youth Advisory Council and London Community Foundation's Youth in Philanthropy group
- Allocate staff time to developing relationships between community centres' Board of Directors and their Youth Advisory Councils so youth can speak honestly about how spaces could better serve their needs
- Dedicate staff time to research at models like the Youth Action Centre and the White Oaks Basketball Court and talk to the youth involved there to see why they are successful hubs for young people
- Create a City of London Coffee Shop program to dedicate money to give to young people who can't afford to visit cafes, and turn private shops into public spaces for young people can't afford them

#### ***Budget Priority 4: Investing in the Back to the River Project Without the Springbank Dam***

##### **We think that...**

Quality interaction with nature and environmental health are equally valuable concerns, and should be treated as such in policy decisions.

##### **We are thinking about this because...**

The Thames River has been a constant topic for discussion in the city over the past year, and the LYAC has had a chance to discuss the Back to the River Project with the Antler River Guardians of the Four Directions, a group of Indigenous youth who are environmental stewards of the Thames River. Some of the councillors feel very strongly about the importance of the Thames River and the Back to the River project, but all felt that decommissioning the Springbank Dam is the best course of action. The councillors did not prioritize the environment or the river's development as more important than the other, and a few insisted that the River can be made a local destination in other ways besides using the water for recreational activities. Many of the councillors value investing in the Forks of the Thames as a landmark and destination for Londoners, and would support the move toward a new design for our forks.

##### **The City of London should...**

- Ensure that funds are allocated in the Back to the River Project to improving water quality and providing environmental education, as is outlined in the Ribbon of the Thames plan
- Consider that the youth councillors value the quality of the Thames River water and objections from First Nations settlements, and that many of the councillors would like to see the dam decommissioned

The London Youth Advisory Council would like to thank our city councillors, Mayor Brown, and our dedicated Staff for hearing our feedback, and thank them for their service to the city of London. We know that you are working hard to plan London's future, and for that you have our gratitude and respect. We thank you for your time, and ask that you carefully consider our positions on these issues discussed today: of how we value investing in **Relationships Between Community and Police**, our interest in improving public transit while continuing to evaluate which **Rapid Transit** plan will serve the city best, our acknowledgement of the need to **Invest in Youth Spaces** and the importance of considering both environmental health and public engagement in the **Back to the River Project**.

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