



The Urban League of London
P.O. Box 574, Station B,
London, Ontario N6A 4W8

November 24, 2021

Mayor E. Holder, Budget Chief Pelosa and members of Council:

2022 Budget Update - Feedback

The Urban League of London is an umbrella organization whose members include over 40 neighbourhood associations and community groups as well as individuals working to improve and connect our city. After reviewing the 2022 Budget Update documents, we respectfully request that Council reject amendment P-7 specific to the \$125,000 reduction of the Neighborhood Decision Making (NDM) and the \$10,000 reduction of the Neighborhood Special Events (NSE), and amendment P-6 for a permanent decrease of \$600,000 investment to reduce the Infrastructure Gap.

Since the NDM program began five years ago, it has grown in popularity and public engagement as evidenced by an increased number of projects. While the opportunity to host NSE has been limited by the pandemic, many groups simply do not have the financial capacity to fund such activities without the city's help.

We would suggest a review and update of the NDM process to ensure that wealthier neighbourhoods and communities do not continue to receive disproportionately more funding than equity seeking and also low income communities. Due to wealthier areas' ability to mobilise votes, the NDM process favours these communities. An update is required to make the NDM process more equitable, and we don't think a reduction in spending would help improve the equitable distribution of funds to equity seeking communities.

As with so many pre-pandemic ways of connecting, Londoners have been challenged to find safe and meaningful opportunities. Neighbourhood projects and special events are important to bring the community together. As we move forward from the pandemic, they will be even more important for re-establishing the trust Londoner's need to re-connect across our city.

In addition, the League has concerns about the proposed reduction to infrastructure spending. Long-term deficits in infrastructure improvements have already made London vulnerable to catastrophic damage and destruction particularly resulting from water damage due to our ageing storm and sanitary sewer infrastructure. **We'd encourage Council to set aside the \$600,000 towards a climate change fund for future use.**

Improving specific infrastructure is critical to ensuring London can address future impacts of climate change. Looking at what towns and cities in BC have experienced over the past six months is an example of what we need to be prepared for. The \$600,000 could then be allocated in 2022 to jumpstart the implementation of the Climate Emergency Action Plan, and demonstrate Council's climate leadership by planning for climate action.

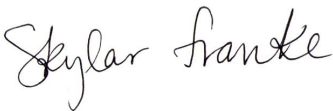
Finally, we are encouraged by the work undertaken to date on including Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) considerations in the budgeting process. Going forward, providing a much deeper analysis and process of who is most impacted by budget items, and why, is needed, but we recognize the start the City has made. In addition, embedding ESGs into the day to day work of administration is necessary and we hope to see this reflected in future decision making.

In closing, we encourage members of council to:

- reject amendment P-7 and maintain NDM and NSE to at least their current level - **but ensure an equity review of the programs is completed before the 2022 NDM process.**
- reject amendment P-6 to close the infrastructure gap - **and re-allocate the funds to a climate action fund.**
- take steps to be even more accountable transparent and rigorous in applying ESG considerations to the budget process

Thank you for considering.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Skylar Franke". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Skylar Franke

President - Urban League of London *on behalf of the Urban League of London Board*