

Deputations 101 – 2021 Budget

Deputations are short (3-5 min.) speeches that Torontonians make to City Council Committees when they meet monthly to discuss a wide range of topics. Anyone can give a deputation. It is your right!

In the lead up to the yearly budget, the Budget Committee holds a series of special budget consultations in several locations throughout the city over the course of a few days and invites residents to give deputations or “depute” about how the budget should be shaped. It is an excellent opportunity for us to express the urgent need to have the TransformTO’s fully funded, its programs staffed. It is our opportunity to highlight certain steps we need to make sure take place to meet our emissions reductions targets, and to ensure that councillors understand that city residents see climate action as urgent and important.

This year is particularly challenging as much staff time has been redirected to urgent COVID response, and the costs and lost revenue related to COVID are a \$1B shortfall in the budget. Detailed info will be provided at our training – and is available on the city website.

Writing your deputation

1. Make it personal!

Rather than focusing on the global issue, it is better to theme your deputation around how climate change impacts you and your neighbourhood or how certain aspects of the TransformTO plan would benefit the people of your ward specifically. Personal stories and experiences are more effective than a lot of statics and scientific findings.

2. Once you have found your hook, build your speech around it.

a) Introduction

State your name and make a clear brief statement indicating what you are asking for. At these budget consultations, there will be many people asking for a myriad of things to be included in the budget. Clearly state that you are seeking full funding for climate action in the budget.

b) Main body

This is when you elaborate on your personal or ward-level story. Some details are good but try to keep the anecdote/story to no more than a minute and a half.

Link your story to your request. A few facts and figures are okay here, especially if they underline the financial benefit of investing in TransformTO. It is the Budget Committee after all! While it is important to be honest and forthright about the urgency of the situation, please keep your tone polite and respectful throughout your deputation.

c) Conclusion

Restate what you are asking the Budget Committee for.

Thank the committee for the opportunity to speak.

3. Be prepared to respond to questions

Once you have finished speaking, the members of the committee may ask you questions. Usually these will be councillors who are in favour of your request and are giving you a chance to speak beyond your 5 minutes. So, they are often softball questions. If you don't know the answer to the question, offer to find the information and to get the answer to the councillor through email or phone.

Preparing to speak

After you have written your deputation, practice it aloud and time yourself. Although you usually have 5 minutes to speak, this time can be reduced to 3 minutes if there is a high volume of deputants. In case this happens, it is best to try to keep your speech to 3 minutes or determine in advance what sections you can cut out and still have a coherent message.

Some people decide that they just aren't comfortable speaking in public. That's fine.

You can always email your deputation in advance to the Budget Committee (buc@toronto.ca) and just come to show your concern by being present. It is recommended that everyone emails their deputations in advance so that they become part of the public record. After speaking, you can also submit a hard copy of your deputation to the Budget Committee clerk who will be present at the deputations. (Given COVID you will need to email it to the clerks.)