

Deputations 101 – 2022 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. And this year we want to the city t be able to start down the path to the Net Zero by 2040 plan. This 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. Detailed info will be provided at our training – and is available on the city website.

<https://www.toronto.ca/city-government/budget-finances/city-budget/how-to-get-involved-in-the-budget/?accordion=committee-and-council-meeting-dates>

And the Environment and Energy budget notes are here:

<https://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2022/bu/bgrd/backgroundfile-174727.pdf>

The budget deputation dates are January 24 and 25. You should be able to request to speak during the day or in the evening. Email your request to the Clerk at buc@toronto.ca. Include your address and phone number and whether you are speaking for a group or as an individual. People are added to the list on a first come basis. Once you are on the list the clerk will send you the info on how to connect to the on-line hearing.

Writing your deputation

1. Make it personal!

Rather than focusing solely on the global issue, we recommend you link the larger climate crisis to how climate change impacts you and your neighbourhood or how certain aspects of the TransformTO or Net Zero plan would benefit the people of your ward specifically. *For example the job potential of major projects such as mass deep retrofits. Another example is health benefits from cleaner air from reduced emissions by electrifying transportation, improving transit, expanded bicycle infrastructure and safe pedestrian routes.* 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 – include the ward you live in

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 climate action. 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. (*This will include: the request for sufficient funds for the TransformTO staff to move the Net Zero by 2040 program forward.*)

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.** Submit this to the Budget Committee clerk who will be present at the deputations. (Given COVID you will need to email it to the clerks.)

It is really important for councillors to hear that climate action and climate justice matters to Toronto residents, especially in this election year!

