



Access Alliance

Multicultural Health and Community Services

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Toronto Municipal Election 2022 – Call to Action

The upcoming municipal election represents a critical point in time for individuals and families in Toronto. Much has changed in the past four years. In particular, the COVID-19 pandemic underscored and deepened existing disparities for racialized immigrants and newcomers. More people are struggling to make ends meet, more people are forced to take on unsafe low paying jobs, and their health is suffering for it. As a community health organization that strives to improve the health and wellbeing of these populations, we recognize that there is much work to be done, both in terms of the services that are offered, but as well in the broader policies that shape health at the population level. With strong investments in the social determinants of health, positive change is still possible for the City of Toronto.

Access Alliance calls on the next municipal government to commit to addressing the following five priority issues so that diverse communities, particularly newcomers, can achieve health with dignity in Toronto.

This list of demands reflects priorities of our own immigrant, refugee and newcomer clients and their communities, as compiled from community-based research evidence, community health needs consultations, civic engagement workshops, and input from a range of staff including health promoters, settlement workers and directors.

1. Affordable Housing & Shelters

- a. Push for the Housing Commissioner of Toronto to be an equity-informed accountability mechanism to address housing discrimination in all its forms (accessing housing and also feeling safe in your own neighbourhood)
- b. Ensure city-funded shelter services are better supporting newcomer, immigrant and refugee shelter users including 2SLGBTQIA+ --- through immigration support & anti-oppression/ anti-racism training for all staff)
- c. Invest more into RentSafe TO (i.e. more Bylaw Enforcement Officers) to improve and maintain quality and livability in rental units, and ensure the inspection process is updated to be transparent and accountable for tenants
- d. Collaborate with other municipalities to advocate to the province to reinstate rent control (vacancy control to limit rent increases between tenants, and reinstating rent control in units rented after November 2018)

2. Active Transportation

- a. When roads are re-built, ensure that *Complete Street Guidelines* such as landscaping, separated bike lanes, wider sidewalks, and traffic calming, are added to increase the safety of all.

- b. Prioritize the completion of the *Cycling Network Plan*, especially in Scarborough, North York, and Etobicoke.
- c. Establish neighbourhood programs that encourage students to ride, walk, or roll to school.
- d. Simplify the process of requesting and installing traffic calming measures on residential streets.

3. Food Security & Land Use

- a. Push for the City of Toronto meet in practice some of its local and international commitments, including:
 - i. Black Food Sovereignty Plan
 - ii. Toronto Food Strategy
 - iii. Toronto's Official Plan
- b. Support resident led groups in accessing City owned land for the purposes of food growing
- c. Put into action the recommendations to the General Manager, Parks, Forestry and Recreation regarding land use on City land
- d. Directly engage community members in the implementation of the 2023-2026 Poverty Reduction Strategy Action Plan

4. Quality Jobs & Livable Incomes

- a. Connect people to quality employment by improving labour laws and supports for workers
 - i. I.e. "equal pay for equal work" for part-time and temporary employees, elimination of misclassification of employees as independent contractors.
- b. Implement TO Prosperity: Toronto Poverty Reduction Strategy
 - i. Advocate to champion a living wage standard across Toronto that covers more than the basic necessities
 - ii. Create effective paths to good careers for low-income youth
- c. Eliminate the system of indentured labour for migrant workers

5. Community Safety

- a. Include newcomer perspectives as an essential component in understanding community safety and wellbeing
- b. Bolster accessibility services as a part of police responses including language interpretation, police officers that are reflective of newcomer populations etc. Increase presence of social worker or mental health counsellor during police response
- c. Enhance other forms, individuals and spaces, that increase community safety to lessen police presence
- d. Increase capacity for organizations to implement prevention programs to decrease violence (other community threats) in communities specifically among youth and those experiencing gender base domestic violence.
- e. Increase awareness and education to mitigate negative stigma or stereotyping of newcomer populations (e.g. Chinese association with COVID, Middle Eastern association with terrorism etc.)