

Toronto mayor welcomes provincial budget

Operation, transit, tourism all set for much-needed funding boost

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Pedestrians pass through Nathan Phillips Square in front of Toronto City Hall on March 16, 2020. Photo by STAN BEHAL /Toronto Sun

There were smiles in the office of Toronto's mayor Wednesday as Ontario's PC government [unveiled its 2021 budget](#), earmarking nearly \$1 billion of funding for pandemic-struck municipalities.

The City of Toronto passed its own budget in February with a \$650-million hole council expected would be filled via handouts by other levels of government.

“I am pleased to see that today’s Ontario budget continues the commitments made previously to invest in Toronto and other municipalities to address our COVID-19 operating costs and pressures, particularly when it comes to transit,” John Tory said Wednesday afternoon.

“Discussions around further support for municipalities are continuing, and we expect will continue over the coming weeks ahead of the federal budget in April.”

While details on how this billion-dollar boost will be distributed are yet to be announced, the provincial budget allots \$500 million for relieving municipal operating pressures, \$225 million for social services, and \$150 million for transit funding.

Transit shortfalls have been a key part of Tory’s pleas for provincial and federal support.

Last month, [Ottawa announced an \\$14.9-billion, eight-year investment](#) in transit — money Tory said was desperately needed.

Earlier this month, the province committed to \$350 million in new funding for the city.

Tory also welcomed the budget’s commitment of cash for Toronto’s small business, tourism and hospitality industries, all hit hard by COVID-19.

“The second round of the Ontario Small Business Support Grant, as well as the creation of the new Ontario Tourism and Hospitality Small Business Support Grant, will be helpful in supporting Toronto’s small businesses and tourism and hospitality sector to recover from the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic,” Tory said.