



PUBLIC SAFETY

What's at Stake in Toronto's
2023 Mayoral By-election



June 2023

Safety First



Public safety is an increasing concern for Torontonians. If our city doesn't feel safe, it won't be a welcoming place for the workers our businesses need to succeed.

Toronto has consistently ranked as one of the safest cities in North America, a competitive advantage in our position as a livable city and a desirable destination. In recent months, however, Torontonians are increasingly concerned about public safety.

The fact is that Toronto does remain, by and large, safer than many comparable jurisdictions, but there are areas of real concern and there is a need to address residents' fears. For instance, the number of violent incidents on public transit has spiked at precisely the time when our city needs riders to return to relieve traffic congestion, support the return of office workers to downtown, and ensure the TTC remains financially viable.

Public Safety

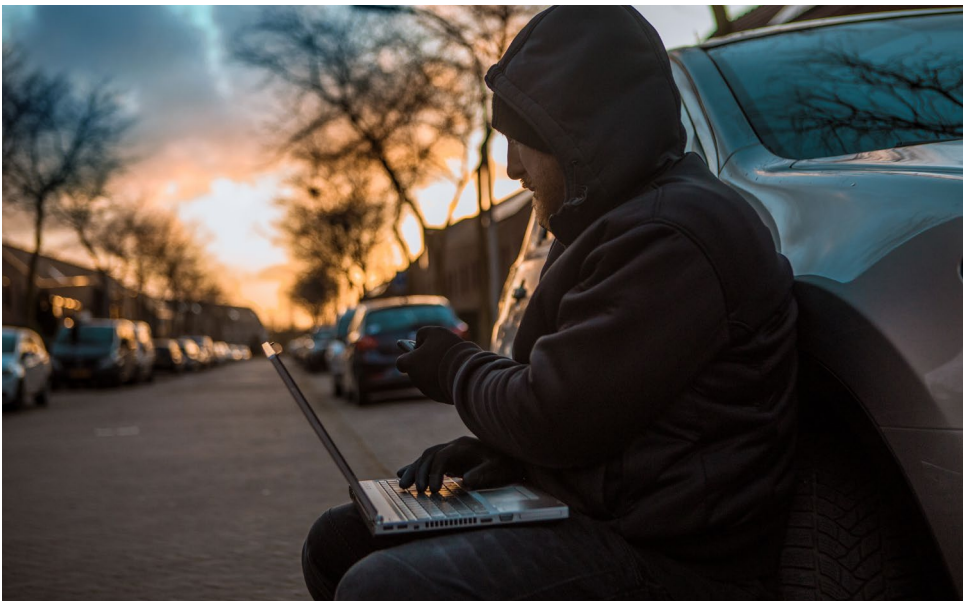


Toronto is also seeing a huge spike in auto thefts, with an 80% rise in car thefts between 2019 and 2021.¹

While property crimes are not necessarily violent, they do contribute to a public perception of a lack of safety that must be addressed.

Building and maintaining a safe city requires working across sectors to ensure effective law enforcement and that root causes of crime are addressed properly.

Addressing this challenge – and reinforcing Toronto’s position as a destination of choice for a talented workforce – will require leaders in all sectors, including the mayor, to act collaboratively to address systemic inequities and the social determinants of health, including income, education, unemployment, food insecurity, housing and working conditions.



¹ The Globe and Mail. (n.d.). As auto thefts rise, all drivers foot the bill. The Globe and Mail. Retrieved June 8, 2023, from <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/drive/article-as-auto-thefts-rise-all-drivers-foot-the-bill/>

By the Numbers

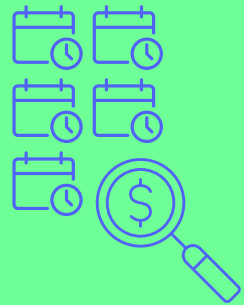
TTC ridership is only at 55% of pre-pandemic levels yet at the same time, incidents of violence against passengers have increased by almost 50% in 2022 relative to 2021, and 60% from 2019.²

A recent poll suggests
44% of Toronto residents feel unsafe riding transit alone.³

The city has provided additional safety measures to support the TTC, including **20+ Community Safety Ambassadors** and **50 security guards** who are trained in mental health first aid, overdose prevention, response training, and nonviolent crisis intervention.⁴

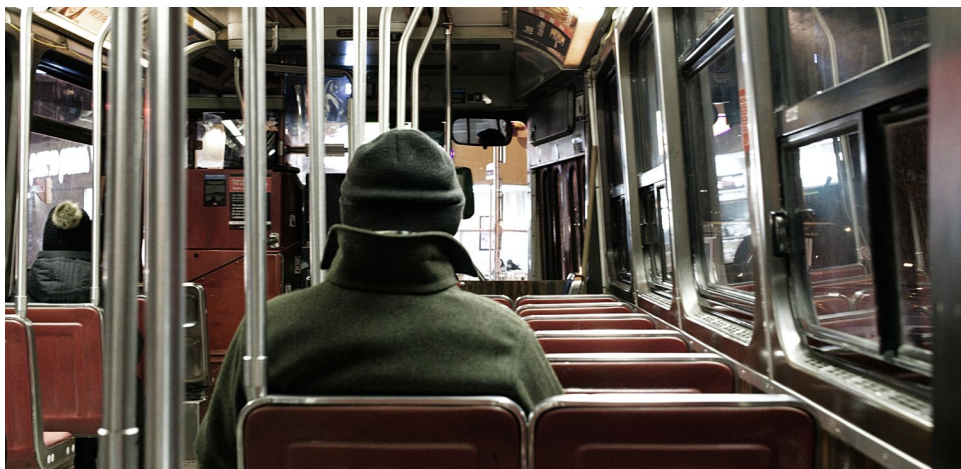


The federal government made an election campaign promise in 2021 to launch a Canada Mental Health Transfer that would have sent a total of **\$4.5 billion to provinces and territories over five years**. However, mental health organizations said in March they have seen **little of that promised money.**⁵



- 2 CityNews Toronto. (2023, February 23). TTC Transit Violence Report Calls for More Security Measures. CityNews Toronto. Retrieved June 8, 2023, from <https://toronto.citynews.ca/2023/02/23/ttc-transit-toronto-violence-report-passengers/>
- 3 <https://www.ipsos.com/en-ca/over-quarter-of-canadians-do-not-feel-safe-taking-public-transit-alone>
- 4 Ipsos. (n.d.). Over quarter of Canadians do not feel safe taking public transit alone. Ipsos. from <https://www.ipsos.com/en-ca/over-quarter-of-canadians-do-not-feel-safe-taking-public-transit-alone>
- 5 CBC News. (2021, November 16). Federal government commits \$597M to boost Canada's mental health care. CBC News. Retrieved June 8, 2023, from <https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/canada-mental-health-federal-government-1.6761689>

What's at Stake



Not only are we all more on edge as a result of crimes across our city, we are also now worried about the future of our city. If the city remains unsafe, fewer people will be willing to walk and take transit, visitors will be less likely to spend their hard-earned money at local attractions, and businesses, particularly in the downtown core, will struggle to make ends meet. A hollowed out city will only lead to more violence.

Simply put, a city cannot prosper if its citizens feel unsafe.



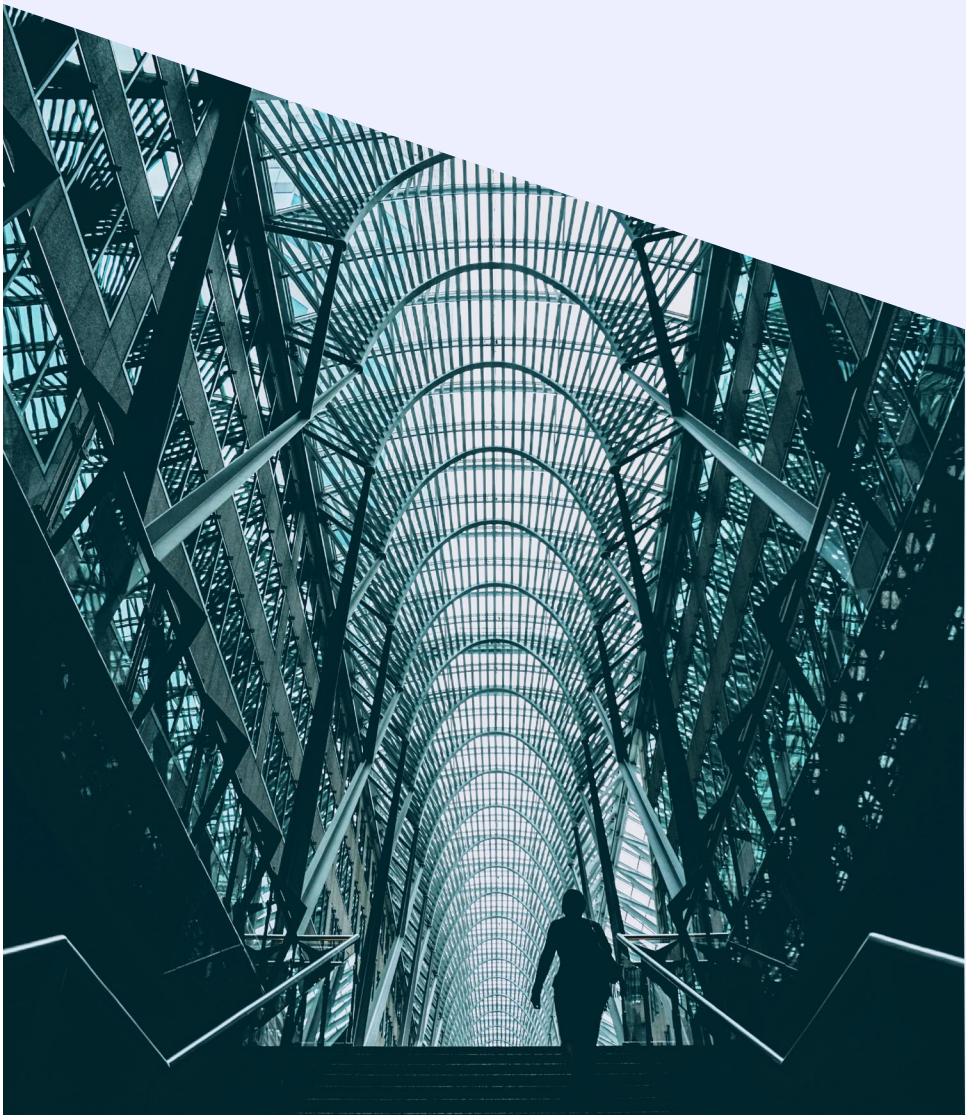
The rising number of public safety incidents is rooted in the mental health crisis, addiction, and chronic homelessness – all issues that were exacerbated by the pandemic. These are regional problems that require a comprehensive approach championed by the City but co-led and funded by the provincial government.



What's at stake is our reputation as a safe city, a reputation that leads to business growth and investment, but more importantly, the civic confidence that makes us want to take part in all the city has to offer, keeping our streets busy and each other safer. That sense of personal safety is hard to recover once gone, and no city can thrive if it's lost.

Questions for Candidates

- ① When it comes to public safety, there are short-term solutions and long-term solutions. How would you balance the need to decrease crime immediately with the need to fix the systemic problems that lead to crime in the first place?
- ② How would you go about working the provincial government to ensure they live up to their responsibilities for regional issues such as the mental health crisis, addiction, and chronic homelessness?





“Our next Mayor must be ready from day one to renew our civic life and social infrastructure. Unchecked, we risk a vicious cycle of public safety incidents and public retreat.

If the city continues to feel unsafe, fewer people will walk and take transit, visitors will be less likely to spend their money at local attractions, and businesses, particularly in the downtown core, will struggle to make ends meet.”

Jan De Silva

President & CEO – Toronto Region Board of Trade



“The fact is, Toronto remains one of the safest major cities in the world. But there remains important work to do.

The next mayor of Toronto can bring a cross-sectoral lens to this complex issue and use their convening power to bring together the necessary data, expertise and community of support to meet the challenge.”

Karen Chapple

Director of School of Cities, University of Toronto

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at stake in Toronto's
Mayoral By-election
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