A PLAN FOR TORONTO · NOVEMBER 2026

The Toronto Youth Alignment Plan

A guaranteed after-school system for Toronto, costed — and the first step in aligning the city’s youth spending behind one published record.



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About this plan

How to read the numbers. Three kinds of numbers run through this plan, and they are never mixed. A guaranteed place is one child promised a spot for the program year, with set hours and set staffing — the strongest promise a city can make. A registration is a sign-up for a course; one child can hold many, and one can last a few hours. A drop-in visit counts a young person once each time they walk through an open door. Most of what Toronto buys today is the second and third kinds.

Money is Canadian dollars unless marked US$. US dollars are converted at US$1 = C$1.3961 (Bank of Canada, November 4, 2026) wherever this plan converts them, and at US$1 = C$1.40 in the published city comparisons, as those sources state. Figures are published, sourced, or labelled as estimates where they appear. The price at the centre of the plan is a model, built line by line in Section 8, and it is called a model every time it appears.

THE TORONTO YOUTH ALIGNMENT PLAN AT A GLANCE

~1,800
guaranteed places Toronto buys today — all in one small City program (2025)

234,408
children aged 5 to 13 in Toronto (2021 Census)

$3,680
modelled price of one guaranteed place, per year (Section 8)

$31.8M
a year for the proposed priority system — 8,643 places (Section 7)

Toronto spends real money on its young people. It just does not spend it as a system. Sixteen streams of funding chase the same effect — supervised, structured programming outside school hours — and between them they guarantee a place to about **1,800 children** in a city with 234,408 children aged 5 to 13.

New York built the system Toronto does not have. Its Department of Youth and Community Development buys after-school places from community organizations by contract — a written specification, a published price, set hours, set ratios, an independent evaluator — and it has run that system, through four mayors, for two decades. New York also got documented things wrong: it pays its providers late, badly; children attend about half the hours their places offer; and its re-bidding rounds have cut loose the neighbourhood organizations the system depends on.

This plan takes the model and designs out the flaws, using fixes Toronto has already proven somewhere in its own system: payment in advance, the way the City already pays its child-care agencies; contract sizes small organizations can hold; a set price with competition on quality; published results as a contract term. It prices the result from Toronto wages and Toronto's school calendar, at three scales, and it states its verdict at exactly the strength the evidence supports — including a section, near the end, on what the plan will not claim.

The companion study, The State of Youth in Toronto (Shariff, 2026), records the conditions this plan responds to. Nothing in this document commits any government.

About the author

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1. The problem: money without a promise

Per young person, Toronto commits less than New York — and more than Vancouver or Los Angeles publish.

Toronto spends real money on its young people. It just does not spend it as a system. Ask what the city does for young people and you will get a long list: after-school programs, library hubs, recreation, summer jobs, safety grants, youth employment. The list is real. What Toronto does not have is a single system — one buyer, one count, one promise a family can rely on.

The spending that chases one effect — supervised, structured, adult-led programming for school-age young people outside school hours — moves through 16 named streams, at least 10 funding streams, and 8 authorities (City of Toronto, 2025). Each runs its own application cycle, its own eligibility rules, its own reporting format, and its own definition of success. No two streams count the same thing. The honest total is about $29–35 million a year, and only $17–22 million of that can be pointed to in a published figure; the rest rests on two clearly labelled estimates, and two real streams — Toronto Community Housing and the school boards — spend something that cannot be counted at all.

Three kinds of numbers — do not mix them

Almost every argument about after-school care in Toronto goes wrong in the same place: three different kinds of counts get treated as if they were the same thing.

A guaranteed place. One child is promised a spot in a program for the whole program year — a set number of hours, a set number of children per staff member, a program that must exist whether or not any particular child shows up on any particular day. This is the strongest promise a city can make.

A registration. A child signs up for a course or a program — a swimming class, a recreation course. A registration can be a few hours long. One child can hold many registrations.

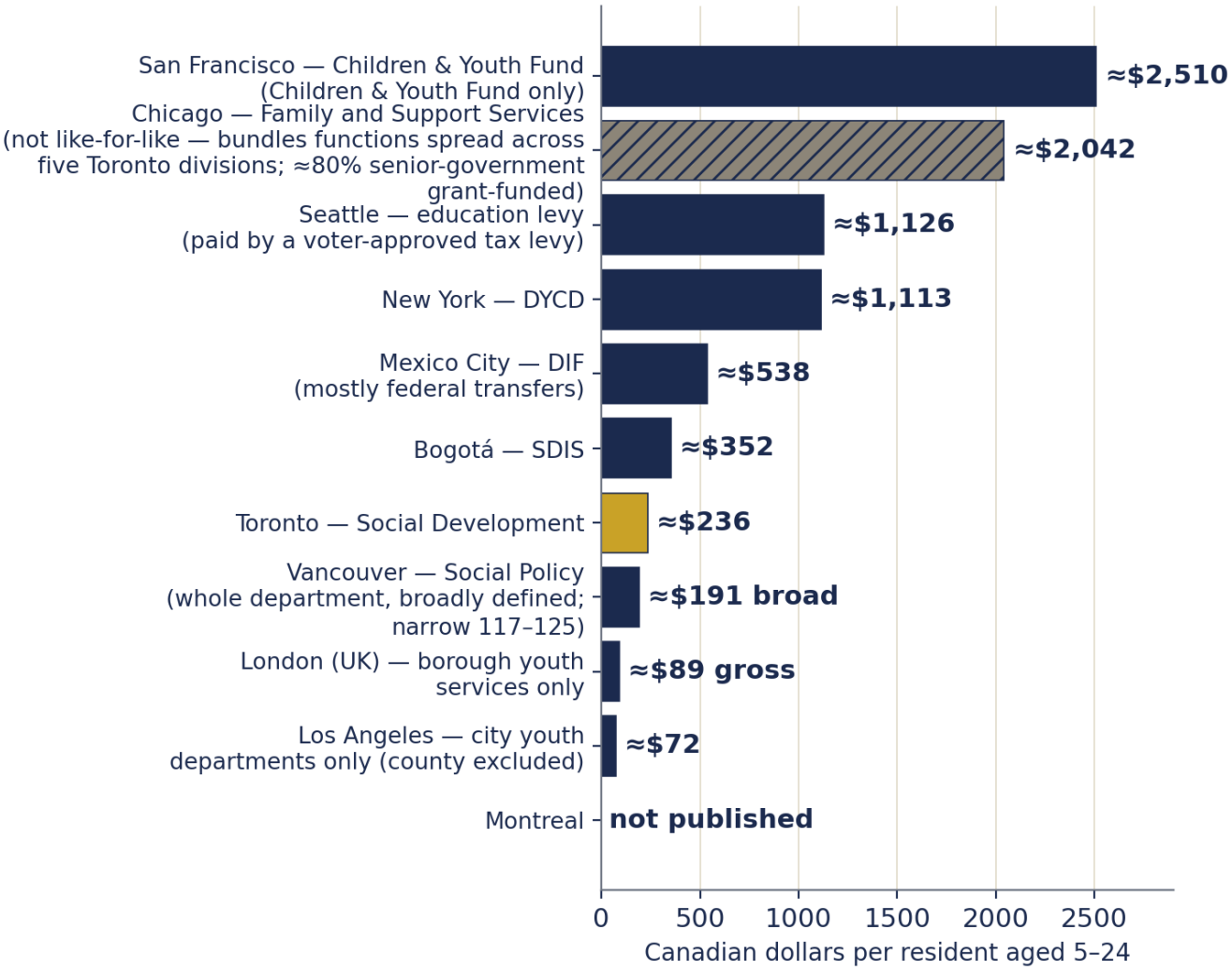
A drop-in visit. A young person walks into a space that is open — a library youth hub, a drop-in centre — and is counted once for that visit. The same teenager, visiting three times a week, is counted three times a week. Nobody was promised anything; the door was open and they came.

> A registration is not a place. A visit is not a place. Only a contracted place — named child, known hours, a staffed ratio, a price — is a promise a family can plan a work schedule around.

Most of what Toronto buys today is the second and third kinds. That is not a criticism of the programs. It is a description of the promise.

Figure 1 — Per young person, Toronto commits ≈$236 — an order of magnitude below New York's ≈$1,113 — in a field each city measures differently

The bars are not measured the same way: each city counts a different bundle of services, so read them as orders of magnitude, not a league table.



Canadian dollars committed per resident aged 5–24, through the department that holds the community/youth mandate. Toronto: Social Development, Finance and Administration, 2025 budget $137.3M over 581,210 residents aged 5–24 (2021 Census). Toronto's figure is an upper bound: the division's full gross budget, most of it not youth-specific. New York: Department of Youth and Community Development, FY2026 adopted budget US$1,514.1M. Vancouver: Social Policy and Projects, 2025, broad definition ($22.3M), narrow $117–$125. Los Angeles: city tier only. Chicago: hatched, not like-for-like, roughly 80% grant-funded. Montreal: not published. Each bar is the department's total published budget from all funding sources combined, not municipal own-source dollars only; funding mixes differ by city. US$1 = C$1.40.

Budget shares can mislead — cities are different sizes, with different numbers of young people. So divide each department's budget by the number of residents aged 5 to 24, and the comparison sharpens. Through the one department that holds the mandate, Toronto commits about $236 per young person — an upper bound (the mandate department's full gross budget over 2021 Census residents) (City of Toronto, 2025; Statistics Canada, 2022). New York commits about $1,113 in Canadian dollars (New York City Department of Youth and Community Development [DYCD], 2026). Vancouver's broad measure and Los Angeles's city-tier figure sit lower than Toronto's; Montreal does not publish a figure at all.

The guarantee gap

Set the money beside the promise it buys. Across the whole envelope, the number of guaranteed places is about **1,800** — the registered places in one small City program that charges fees — in a city with 234,408 children aged 5 to 13 (Statistics Canada, 2022). Everything else buys registrations, drop-in visits, summer engagements, or grants that count young people "reached." No other Toronto program can promise a named child a place next September.

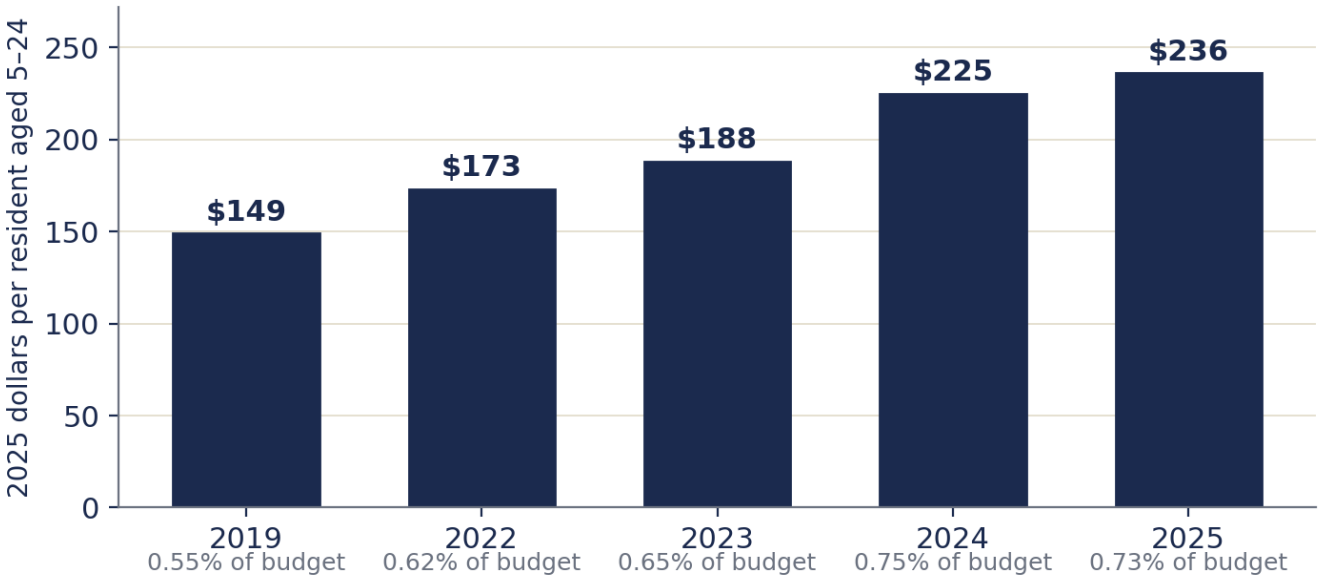
> ~1,800
>
> guaranteed places in the whole envelope — every one of them in After-School Recreation Care, the City's small fee-charging program, out of 234,408 children aged 5–13 (Statistics Canada, 2022).

Inside Toronto's own budget, the division that holds the youth mandate is the smallest major division there is: Social Development, Finance and Administration (SDFA) takes 0.73% of the City's operating budget (City of Toronto, 2025). New York's DYCD takes 1.31% of its city's budget (DYCD, 2026). The cities that commit the most built one buyer, one price, and one promise; Toronto built sixteen streams and no promise at all.

Fairness requires the other half of the picture. Toronto's commitment per young person is rising — up 58% in real terms from 2019 to 2025, with the division's share of the city budget climbing from 0.55% to 0.73% over the same span (City of Toronto, 2025). Anyone who says the commitment is falling is wrong on the published numbers. Much of the growth is scope rather than youth investment — a machinery transfer in 2020 and the community-safety build-out grew the division around youth work faster than the youth work itself grew. The honest framing is rising, and still far behind.

None of this is a new diagnosis. In 2012, City Council adopted the Middle Childhood Strategy (CD16.2), which called the provision "fragmented" — split across licensed child care, recreation, non-profits, schools, private providers, and informal care, with "no shared standards of quality" (City of Toronto, 2012). The strategy had the language of a system: common standards, shared funder requirements, a central database, coordinated planning. It built none of the machinery that makes those nouns real — no buyer, no price, no contract, no committed funding, no accountable owner. Its tangible delivery outcome was an expansion of the City's own program by eighteen sites. By January 2017, four years after adoption, the coalition that originated the strategy was writing to Budget Committee pleading for one dedicated full-time staff person to oversee implementation. Toronto adopted this diagnosis in 2012 and produced eighteen sites and a plea for one staff person. The difference a real system would make is not the diagnosis. It is the machinery.

Figure 2 — Toronto spends more per young person than it did — $236 in 2025, up from $149 in 2019 in today's dollars — and still far less than New York's $1,113



Social Development, Finance and Administration gross budget per resident aged 5–24, restated in 2025 dollars (Statistics Canada CPI, all-items, Canada, annual average). Labels under each year: the division's share of the City operating budget. Denominators are census counts held between censuses — 2016 Census (602,405 residents aged 5–24) for 2019, 2021 Census (581,210) for 2022–2025 — so the recent years are upper bounds if the youth population has grown since 2021. 2020 and 2021 are not charted: no single published adopted total was located for those years on a consistent basis. Nominal figures: $123 (2019), $159 (2022), $180 (2023), $220 (2024), $236 (2025). Real-terms rise 2019 to 2025: 58%. Source: City of Toronto adopted budgets; the research file behind this plan — per-youth series (PER-YOUTH.md, sections 7–8).

More money. More services. Worse outcomes.

The money rose. The division that holds the youth mandate grew from **$74.3 million** in 2019 to **$137.3 million** in 2025 — from **$149** to **$236** per young person in today's dollars, a real rise of 58%, and from 0.55% to 0.73% of the City's operating budget. SafeTO, the community safety plan, carries **$43 million** in 2025 and **$49 million** in 2026. The division's staff complement roughly doubled over the period, from 170 positions in 2020 to **365** in 2025 (City of Toronto, 2025).

Most of the growth is not youth work. The two biggest step-changes in the series are a machinery transfer — Human Services Integration moved into the division in 2020 — and the community-safety build-out: SafeTO and the Toronto Community Crisis Service, launched in 2022. The division grew around youth work faster than the youth work itself grew. Of the $137.3 million, only about **$10 million** can be identified as youth programming in published lines. The City publishes no youth total at all; that absence is a finding, not a footnote (City of Toronto, 2025).

What grew was the response system. Crisis response, safety programming, grants machinery, and drop-in access all expanded for real: Library Youth Hubs grew from 8 branches in 2017 to **31 branches** in 2025, recording **129,000 teen visits** in the first eight months of 2025 (Toronto Public Library, 2025). But the build-out is reactive, and it is counted in activity — visits, calls, dispatches — not in outcomes. Across the whole system, the number of guaranteed places a family can rely on is still about **1,800**.

Over the same years, the conditions young people live in moved the other way. Child low income on the taxfiler measure (CFLIM-AT) rose from 16.8% in 2020 to **25.3%** in 2022 — **117,890 children**; the

2020 figure includes temporary pandemic income supports, so the rise is read with that caution (Campaign 2000, Family Service Toronto, & Social Planning Toronto, 2024). The share of Toronto youth rating their mental health fair or poor rose from 27.1% in 2019 to **37.0%** in 2023; the share who had seriously contemplated suicide moved from 16.7% to 18.0%, a change Toronto Public Health describes as stable (Toronto Public Health, 2025). **24.9%** of Toronto households were food insecure in the Who's Hungry 2024 report (Daily Bread Food Bank & North York Harvest Food Bank, 2024). The City's one-night homelessness count more than doubled, from 7,347 people in April 2021 to **15,418** in October 2024 — the two counts were taken in different seasons, and the later count includes a large number of refugee claimants (City of Toronto, 2025). Youth unemployment in the Toronto CMA stood at **18.0%** in 2025 (Statistics Canada, 2026).

One thing improved, and it matters. Violence fell hard in 2025: shootings and firearm discharges fell from 462 to **263**, and homicides from 85 to **45** (Toronto Police Service, 2026). It is one year, after a 2024 count that still stood near the 2019 peak of 492, and no published evaluation attributes the fall to any program. The City states that its 2025 efforts "contributed to" a 40% summer reduction in gun violence (City of Toronto, 2025); that claim is the City's, and this plan neither adopts it nor dismisses it. The published record supports neither credit nor blame.

Money grew. Machinery grew. Activity grew. What was never built is a system that promises a young person a place — and reports whether their life improved. That is the gap this plan exists to close.

2. Toronto today: four programs, four kinds of promise

Toronto does not have an after-school system. It has four different answers to the after-school question, owned by four different authorities, counting four different things. Each is a real program doing real work. Read together, they show what a guarantee is — by showing what happens without one.

After-School Recreation Care: the City runs a small version itself

After-School Recreation Care (ARC) is the City's own after-school program, run by City recreation staff in schools and community centres, for children aged 6 to 12, from the end of the school day to 6 p.m., Monday to Friday. Parents pay fees; a City subsidy, the Welcome Policy, reduces the fee for low-income families. ARC began in 2006 as a pilot at 21 sites in priority neighbourhoods. In 2025 it ran **44 programs**, with about **1,800 children** registered (City of Toronto, 2025).

On cost, the record goes quiet. ARC's last published budget figure is from 2013 — $2.3 million gross, and $2,556 per child. Adjusted for inflation, that 2013 figure is about $3,600 in 2026 dollars. The City stopped publishing the program's cost after 2013, and its results are not reported publicly.

What ARC guarantees, it genuinely guarantees. A registered place in ARC is a real place: a named child, a known program, known hours, City staff. It is the closest thing Toronto has to a guaranteed place — and the whole of it fits about 1,800 children. ARC proves Toronto can run a real place, in Toronto schools, with Toronto staff. **It also proves** that a program without a published price and published results stays small and unaccountable, because nothing in its structure requires anything else.

> **Runs it:** The City — City recreation staff, in schools and community centres
> **Ages:** 6 to 12
> **What it counts:** A guaranteed place — a registered place is a real place
> **Scale:** 44 programs, about 1,800 registered places (children registered; City of Toronto, 2025) (2025)
> **Cost:** Last published 2013 — $2.3 million gross, $2,556 per child (about $3,600 in 2026 dollars)
> **The promise:** A real guaranteed place — for about 1,800 children.

Library Youth Hubs: an open door, honestly counted

Toronto Public Library runs Youth Hubs: staffed drop-in spaces for teenagers inside library branches, open weekday afternoons (3:30–7 p.m.) for young people roughly 13 to 19 — homework, computers, programs, or simply somewhere safe and warm. The hubs grew from 8 branches in 2017 to 31 branches in 2025. The library counts use precisely: **129,000 teen visits** between January and August 2025, with 2,330 programs offered and 17,700 program participants (Toronto Public Library, 2025).

The library does not publish a total cost for all 31 hubs. The 2025 expansion shows the unit plainly — three hubs, 7.0 staff positions, $0.887 million a year, roughly $296,000 per hub — and multiplying that published unit across the network gives an estimated $9.2 million a year. An estimate, labelled as one wherever it travels.

A visit is not a place. The 129,000 figure counts visits, and the library, to its credit, says "visits" and means it. Any teenager may come; no teenager is promised a place, a program, or a result, and the hubs

serve teenagers only — they do nothing for the elementary years, when the after-school gap opens first. Notice, though, why the hubs report so well: they were approved the way a contract is approved, as a discrete expansion with a staff count, a budget, and expected visits written down in advance. Given a written expectation, Toronto's own institutions report against it.

Runs it: Toronto Public Library

Ages: Roughly 13 to 19

What it counts: Visits — 129,000 teen visits, not places

Scale: 31 branches (2025), grown from 8 in 2017

Cost: Total not published — about $296,000 per hub (2025 expansion); an estimated $9.2 million a year for the network

The promise: An open door — no teenager is promised a place.

Ontario Before-and-After School Programs: the province sets the duty, parents pay

Provincial law requires school boards to make sure a before- and after-school program is offered for children from junior kindergarten to Grade 6 where parents want one. Licensed child-care operators and school boards deliver the programs, in schools. Licensed capacity in Toronto was **40,943 spaces** in December 2025 (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2025).

Read that number carefully: it is spaces licensed to exist, not children in them. How many children actually hold places is not published. Parents pay the fees, and the fees are expressly unregulated — around Toronto's largest board they run about $26 to $42 per school day, roughly $4,900 to $7,900 over a school year. Toronto administers the child-care fee subsidy that helps some families pay; at December 31, 2025, 16,367 children were on its waitlist, all ages, not just school-age (City of Toronto, 2025). That waitlist is evidence of pressure on the subsidy system. It is not an after-school demand figure, and it should never be quoted as one.

So a program must be offered — but no child is guaranteed a place their family can afford, at a regulated price, to a common standard, with published results. This is the largest after-school "system" Toronto has, and it is mostly a market. It proves demand beyond argument: families are already paying private prices for after-school care. It does not guarantee anything.

Runs it: Licensed child-care operators and school boards, under a provincial duty

Ages: Junior kindergarten to Grade 6

What it counts: Licensed spaces — spaces licensed to exist, not children in them

Scale: 40,943 licensed spaces in Toronto (December 2025); children actually holding places — not published

Cost: Parents pay unregulated fees — about $26 to $42 per school day (roughly $4,900 to $7,900 over a school year)

The promise: A program must be offered — no child is guaranteed a place.

Toronto Youth Job Corps: the contract proof

The Toronto Youth Job Corps (TYJC) is a full-time, paid employment program for young people aged 15 to 30 who are out of school and out of work and facing serious barriers: about five weeks of intensive group

training, then a supported employer placement for up to 16 weeks, then continued support. Participants are paid minimum wage, up to 35 hours a week, in every phase. Community agencies deliver it under contracts awarded by competition — the City buys this program rather than running it.

Because the City buys it by contract, the targets are written down. The 2024–2028 contracts total **$18,036,434** — $15,227,669 from the federal government and $2,808,765 from the City — about $4.51 million a year (City of Toronto, 2025). The contract targets 1,152 young people over four years, of whom 692 are expected to be employed and 230 back in school. And a longer record exists to argue with: for 2009–2023, the City published 4,105 young people trained, 1,947 employed, and 774 returned to school.

The second half of the lesson matters as much as the first, and leaving it out would forfeit the point. Results against the current contract are not published. And the Social Development division's own budget notes print a different figure for the same program — 2,120 "youth hired" in 2023 alone, a number that cannot describe the same program as a contract targeting 1,152 youth over four years. The two City numbers sit side by side in City documents, unexplained and unreconciled. The contract created the target; nothing created the duty to publish against it. Job Corps is youth employment, not after-school programming, and it sits outside the spending totals in this plan. **Its role here is the contract lesson:** targets without published results are half a contract.

Runs it: Community agencies under City contracts awarded by competition — the City buys it, rather than running it

Ages: 15 to 30, out of school and out of work

What it counts: Contract targets — 1,152 young people over four years

Scale: 2024–2028 contracts; 4,105 young people trained over 2009–2023

Cost: $18,036,434 over 2024–2028 — about $4.51 million a year

The promise: Targets are written down — results against the current contract are not published.

3. The model: New York buys after-school by the place

New York City does not run after-school programs. It buys them — the way it buys road repair: a written specification, a published price, a contract, an inspection.

COMPASS: one buyer, one price, one count

The Comprehensive After School System of New York City (COMPASS) is New York's after-school system for children from kindergarten to Grade 8: homework help, sports, arts, science activities, leadership — in a school, a community centre, a place of worship, a public-housing building or a park facility, free to the family, every school day. It is ordinary, developmental programming, not crisis response: supervision and structure in the hours between the end of school and the end of the workday.

The buyer is DYCD, the city department for youth and community programs. DYCD runs no programs itself. It writes the specification, runs a competition — a request for proposals (RFP), a formal process where organizations bid for the work — and signs contracts with community-based organizations to deliver. The current contracts run six years (2026–2032), long enough for a provider to hire staff and plan. To bid, an organization needs at least three years' experience; proposals are scored, with the quality of the program plan worth 40 points. DYCD's own program managers each cover about 20 sites — visiting programs, approving plans and budgets, reviewing attendance and financial reports, and ordering fixes when a provider falls short. One web-based system, DYCD Connect, holds registrations, attendance and invoicing for every provider. DYCD has also hired an outside research firm, the American Institutes for Research (AIR), to evaluate the system independently (DYCD, 2026).

The system began in 2005 as Out-of-School Time, at US$46 million, and was renamed COMPASS in 2014. It now comprises more than 820 programs, at about US$447.6 million a year for **102,104 guaranteed places** (DYCD, 2026). The contracts do not just buy a child's presence. They buy a dose: elementary contracts require 1,020 hours of programming a year, and staff-to-child ratios are set in the contract. Every elementary program runs against a published attendance benchmark — a Rate of Participation of 80% — tracked in the system's own data, so "did children actually show up?" is answered from records, not impressions.

COMPASS, by the contract	Figure
Programs	820+
Guaranteed places	102,104
Funding	~US$447.6M a year
Elementary price	US$4,800 per child (school year)
Middle-school price (School's Out NYC — SONYC)	US$3,900 per child
Elementary contracted hours	1,020 a year
Rate of Participation benchmark (elementary)	80%
Contract term	Six years (2026–2032)

Four mayors carried this system. Bloomberg created it, de Blasio scaled it, Adams funded the expansion, and Mamdani is executing it. That run is the point: a baselined contract system survives elections, because

each successive budget re-enacts it. An envelope of grants, renewed program by program, has no such protection.

SONYC: the middle-school years, treated as their own problem

School's Out New York City (SONYC) is the middle-school model inside COMPASS — Grades 6 to 8, roughly ages 11 to 13. It exists as a separate model because middle school is where after-school usually falls apart: children who attended happily at age 9 vote with their feet at 12. SONYC's answer is to stop running the program like a class. It is structured as clubs — sports, arts, leadership — and young people choose how they spend their time. It launched in 2014 as the centrepiece of the COMPASS expansion, a US$145 million investment. The middle-school contract requires 540 hours of programming a year, a deliberately lighter dose than the elementary 1,020, at a published price of US$3,900 per child (DYCD, 2026). New York reports SONYC inside the COMPASS totals; it does not publish a separate current budget or place count for the middle-school model alone.

AIR evaluated the expansion year independently. Registration went from 18,702 young people to 58,745 in one year, participants attended 13 million hours in total — an average of 236 hours per participant — and program quality was rated high across 2,300 hours of direct observation (American Institutes for Research [AIR], 2016). In the same evaluation, 98% of surveyed parents said their child liked the program. That last figure needs its label: it is perception-grade evidence. It proves families valued the service, which matters for take-up and durability. It proves nothing about outcomes, and satisfaction must never be allowed to stand in for impact.

What the evidence actually shows

Start with what the system-level evidence is: it documents implementation and participation, not test-score impact. Policy Studies Associates (PSA) evaluated the earlier citywide out-of-school-time system with a matched comparison group and found that participants reported strong academic benefits and motivation — but their standardized test-score gains were not significantly different from matched non-participants (Policy Studies Associates [PSA], n.d.). A later PSA study found something a buyer can act on: when DYCD required academic content in after-school programs, program quality and coordination with schools improved (PSA, 2015). Quality, participation and family outcomes are documented. A test-score effect is not.

No evaluation has shown a test-score effect; the proven returns are places delivered, hours attended, quality, family satisfaction, and — for summer jobs — safety.

SYEP: the summer-jobs sibling, and the safety evidence

The Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP) is DYCD's second flagship: for six weeks each July and August, New Yorkers aged 14 to 24 hold real, paid summer jobs, placed through community organizations under contract, with the city paying the wages. It is not after-school care, and nothing here counts it as any. It belongs in this plan because it carries the strongest causal evidence in the field — places were allotted by lottery, so researchers could compare winners and losers who were alike in everything but luck. SYEP has served more than 100,000 young people every summer from 2022 through 2025 (DYCD, 2026).

Gelber, Isen and Kessler followed 294,580 applications from 2005–2008, linked to tax, incarceration and mortality records (Gelber, Isen and Kessler, 2014). Earnings rose in the program year itself — about $876 net, even after counting the other work participants would likely have done anyway. The study found no effect on college enrolment, and a modest earnings decrease of about $100 a year across the three years after the program year. The durable results were about safety: the probability of incarceration was about

10% lower across all applicants — the much larger figure of about 54% applies only among 19–21-year-olds, and it should never be quoted without that qualifier — and mortality from external causes was about one-fifth lower. Read whole, the study says something precise: the proven long-run return of a guaranteed summer job is safety, not schooling and not earnings. That evidence belongs to paid places for older youth. It is not evidence about after-school places for ten-year-olds, and this plan does not present it as such.

4. What's broken in New York

New York's system works. Its failures are documented too — in its own comptroller's counts, its own evaluations, and its own re-bidding rounds. Toronto's design takes the machinery and designs the failures out. Each one below is a reason the Toronto version is written the way it is.

The city pays late — badly

In 2024, over 90% of New York's human-services contracts were registered late. First payments from DYCD averaged more than a year after the contract started (NYC Comptroller, 2025). Non-profits — organizations whose costs are mostly payroll, paid monthly — borrowed money to make payroll while waiting for the city that hired them. Providers financing the government is not an administrative blemish. It lands hardest on the smallest, most neighbourhood-rooted organizations, the ones a system like this claims to want, and it breaks the staffing chain that quality depends on at its first link. Toronto's counter-design already exists in Toronto: the City's children's-services system pays its agencies in advance — child care monthly in advance, EarlyON quarterly in advance. The Toronto Youth Alignment Plan’s contracts pay quarterly in advance, with the City's own payment record published beside the providers'.

Children attend roughly half the hours offered

A contracted hour is not an attended hour. SONYC's evaluated expansion offered 540 hours and delivered an average of 236 attended hours per participant — 43.7% of the offer (AIR, 2016). Across systems, realized dose runs at roughly 40–60% of contracted hours. New York's 80% Rate of Participation is a site-level fill measure, not a per-child dose: a site can hit its benchmark while the average child receives half the offer. None of this makes the places worthless — 236 attended hours is a real service — but any honest system budgets and reports both numbers: hours contracted, and hours attended, per child. A plan that reports places as if they were doses will be found out by its own evaluation, and the verdict will be that after-school doesn't work, when what actually happened is that the dose was never delivered as described.

> **236 of 540**
>
> hours attended on average in SONYC's evaluated expansion year — 43.7% of the hours the contract offered (AIR, 2016). The contract has to be written for that reality, not for the brochure.

Re-bidding severs relationships

When DYCD re-ran its competitions for the 2026 cycle, long-standing providers lost programs at dozens of schools. In one Manhattan district, 12 programs changed hands from a single provider. Parents campaigned to get "their" organizations back. A contract system treats providers as interchangeable; after-school quality lives in relationships — a staff member who knows a child's life, an organization rooted in a neighbourhood — and a re-bid can cut exactly that. The fix is not to abandon competition. It is to design turnover: tiered contract sizes small organizations can hold, transition protections so a family's registration and records move through the shared data system when a provider changes, and competition rules that weigh rootedness alongside the program plan.

Price discipline: what Toronto adds

New York's price is a published total — the city states what it will pay, and providers compete on the quality of their program rather than on who can promise to do it cheapest. Toronto's design keeps that discipline and states its price differently: built bottom-up, line by line, from Toronto wages and Toronto's school calendar, so every component can be argued with in the open. Toronto also adds two contract terms. The first is indexation: the price adjusts annually with the consumer price index, so a six-year contract does not quietly squeeze providers as costs move — a fixed price held for six years is not saved by anyone; it is spent in turnover and unfilled ratios. The second is a contracted participation benchmark: the 80% Rate of Participation written into the Toronto contract as a term, with attended hours per child published under it, rather than carried as a system description. A published price, on its own, does not protect a contract against time or against the gap between hours offered and hours attended. Toronto's terms are written against both.

Results are published unevenly

New York does evaluate: AIR's independent work on COMPASS and SONYC is the reason this plan can describe the expansion year in attended hours and observed quality at all. But evaluation commissioned for a program is not the same as results published as a standing term — and SONYC's own numbers disappear inside the COMPASS totals, so the hardest-to-serve age group can vanish inside a system-wide average. Toronto does not need to travel to learn this lesson; Section 2’s Job Corps record is the local version of the same failure. So in the Toronto Youth Alignment Plan, publishing is a contract term, not a favour: quarterly publication of registrations, attendance and fill rates from the shared data system, an annual public report against the contracted targets, and an independent evaluation funded as an explicit line item — whether the results flatter the program or not.

5. The five fixes

NEW YORK · FLAW		TORONTO · FIX
The city pays late. Over 90% of human-services contracts were registered late in 2024; first payments averaged more than a year.	→	**Payment in advance.** Quarterly advances, 30-day terms, interest on late City payment — the way Toronto already pays its child-care agencies.
Compliance squeezes out small organizations. Fixed costs fall hardest on the rooted, neighbourhood providers.	→	**Contract sizes they can hold.** Tiered lots, a reserved small-organization share, anchor partners for back office and data.
Cheapest-wins and lock-in. Price competition thins quality; re-bids sever the relationships quality lives in.	→	**A set price, quality competition.** Six-year terms, district caps, a new-entrant reserve, transition protections for families.
Buyer-designed rigidity. A central specification can flatten what local providers do best.	→	**A city floor, provider design.** The contract sets hours, ratios, safety, price, reporting — and nothing above it. A protected grant layer stays beside it.
Results are an afterthought. Targets without published results are half a contract.	→	**Publishing is a contract term.** Quarterly results, an annual public report, independent evaluation funded at 1.5% of contract value — and never pay-by-results.

New York built the machinery Toronto needs. It also showed, in plain sight, how that machinery can hurt the very organizations it depends on. Each fix below starts from a documented New York failure and answers it with a practice Toronto already runs somewhere in its own system. Nothing here is invented from whole cloth.

Fix 1 — Late payment becomes payment in advance, with enforceable terms

New York pays late, badly. In 2024, more than 90% of its human-services contracts were registered late, and a provider's first payment from the Department of Youth and Community Development took, on average, more than a year after the contract started (NYC Comptroller, 2025). Non-profits borrowed money to make payroll while waiting for the city that hired them.

Toronto does not need to invent the answer. Agencies holding a City service agreement in the children's system “may receive payments in advance of delivering services” — child-care funding monthly in advance, EarlyON Child and Family Centre funding quarterly in advance (City of Toronto, 2026). EarlyON is delivered by 50 organizations at 232 locations under City agreements, so the plumbing is not a pilot. It is ordinary practice in one part of the City, missing in another.

The Toronto Youth Alignment Plan’s contracts therefore specify quarterly advances against the schedule of places, 30-day payment terms on reconciliations, and interest owed on late City payment, written into the

agreement itself. Terms a provider can enforce, not courtesies a division can extend. The provider never finances the government.

Fix 2 — The squeeze on small organizations

Fixed compliance costs fall hardest on small, rooted organizations. Track-record minimums, insurance, data systems, audited statements — the bill is much the same whether an organization runs one site or twenty. When New York re-ran its competitions for the 2026 cycle, long-standing providers lost programs at dozens of schools, and parents campaigned to get “their” organizations back.

The design answers with contract sizes small organizations can actually hold. Contracts are let in lots of different sizes — school-cluster lots a single-site organization can hold, district lots for multi-site providers — with compliance requirements scaled to the size of the lot. City procurement rules require open competition above $133,800 and allow invitational processes below it, so lot design works with that structure rather than around it. The City's Social Procurement Program already steers purchases of $3,000 to $100,000 toward certified diverse suppliers (City of Toronto, 2026).

A stated share of places in each district is reserved for organizations under a size threshold, competing among themselves at the same set price. Where a neighbourhood's organizations are all small, one anchor partner holds the contract, the data system and the back office while neighbourhood groups deliver. That is the exact structure of the Toronto Community Crisis Service — five anchor partners, each assigned its area (City of Toronto, 2025).

One warning comes from Ontario's employment-services rebuild, and the design takes it seriously. When an intermediary layer holds the funder relationship, the relationship can drift away from the neighbourhood agency. The counter is direct: delivery contracts and site identity stay with the organizations doing the work. The anchor is their service provider, not their replacement.

Fix 3 — Cheapest-wins and lock-in

The price per child is set by the City from a published cost model. New York already does this — its competitions state the price and award at that price. Providers compete on quality instead. New York scores the program plan at 40 points. The Toronto Youth Alignment Plan scores quality, neighbourhood rootedness and staffing plans, at a fixed price.

Lock-in gets its own machinery. Terms run six years, with a mid-term performance review. No provider can hold more than a capped share within a district. Each re-competition carries a new-entrant reserve. And when a provider does change, a family's registration and records move through the shared data system, so a change of contractor does not orphan families — the harm families felt in New York's 2026 re-bid, designed out in advance.

Fix 4 — Buyer-designed rigidity

A contract can smother the thing it buys if the buyer specifies too much. So this one specifies the floor — hours, ratios, safety, price, reporting — and nothing above it. Curriculum, cultural design and program identity stay with providers. New York's own flexible model shows a buyer can contract for flexibility and still know what it bought.

The system is deliberately a hybrid. A parallel grant stream continues for experimental and hyper-local work that cannot be specified in units — the layer where grants genuinely beat contracts. In Toronto terms, the Community Partnership and Investment Program and the SafeTO youth-violence-prevention grants are not raided to fund this system. They are re-anchored as its innovation layer.

Fix 5 — Publishing results is a contract term, and evaluation is a budget line

Toronto Youth Job Corps carries written targets in its contracts, yet no results against the current contract are published, and its own division's budget notes print numbers that cannot describe the same program. The pattern repeats across the city. Where money leaves by contract or by a formal expansion case, outputs get written down. The standing patchwork reports inputs.

The Toronto Youth Alignment Plan writes the remedy into every contract: quarterly publication of registrations, attendance and fill rates from the shared data system; an annual public report against the contracted targets; and an independent evaluation funded as an explicit line item — 1.5% of contract value, inside the system layer priced in Section 8 — following New York's precedent of contracting the American Institutes for Research to evaluate its system.

Payment is for delivery to specification. Sacramento's Advance Peace contract worked that way: pay for faithful delivery of a defined intervention, evaluate the outcomes separately (City of Sacramento, 2017). The Toronto Youth Alignment Plan does not pay by results for child outcomes. That model's documented failure is the United Kingdom's Troubled Families programme, which paid on self-reported proxy measures, reported 99% “success,” and produced a success rate its own national evaluation could not find (United Kingdom, 2016). That is the clearest warning in the research, and the design heeds it.

The machinery the fixes run on

Fixes need a machine to run on. Three pieces carry the weight.

One named buyer. A dedicated youth services unit inside Social Development, Finance and Administration — the City's social-development division — writes the specification, runs the competitions, holds the price list, employs the monitors, runs the data system and publishes the results. The division already buys rather than delivers: of its $137.3M gross budget, $62.2M is purchased services (City of Toronto, 2025). Contracting with community organizations is its normal way of working.

Two bands, bought to a standard. The elementary band runs at 1 staff member to 10 children for 596 school-year hours. The middle band runs at 1 to 15 for 540 hours, in the club-shaped form older children will actually attend. Both ratios sit deliberately above Ontario's licensed floor of 1 to 13 for kindergarten and 1 to 15 for primary and junior school-age children. The design buys the higher standard and prices the difference openly.

One data system, with a public dashboard. Every provider registers children, records attendance and invoices inside a single City system — the pattern Toronto already requires of shelter providers. City monitors, each covering about 20 sites, visit programs, approve plans and budgets, and direct fixes when a provider falls short. A paid junior-staff layer for local young people aged 16 to 24 adds hands and opens a first-job pipeline. Junior staff never count toward the ratios, and no child is supervised by anyone under 18.

6. Who runs the sites: three honest options

Everything so far assumes one answer to a question worth asking out loud: who employs the people at each site? There are three honest options. They differ in who delivers. They do not differ in what is guaranteed, because the guarantee lives in the layer above delivery — the standards, the hours, the monitors, the data system, and the published results.

Contract — buy

Employs the staff: community organizations, under contract to the City.

Accountability: the contract — competition to lose, terms to enforce.

The guarantee: City layer — standards, hours, monitors, data, published results. This is the model the plan prices.

In-house — build

Employs the staff: Parks, Forestry and Recreation, the way it runs ARC today.

Accountability: management — no competition, no agreement to enforce.

The guarantee: the same City layer, applied to the City's own sites. ARC's record — about 1,800 children, cost unpublished since 2013 — is the caution.

Tandem — share the floor

Employs the staff: shared — the division's space and junior staff layer; community organizations deliver the programming.

Accountability: split — and the split has to be named in advance, or the model fails.

The guarantee: the same City layer across both kinds of site. Same price band as the contract model — the gains are avoided duplication, not a lower price.

The contract model is the base case, and the one priced in this plan. The City buys the whole service from community organizations, as New York does. Providers hire the staff, run the sites, and answer to the contract. Parks, Forestry and Recreation hosts programs where they use its spaces. This model carries two decades of New York evidence behind it.

The in-house model has Parks, Forestry and Recreation run the system with its own staff, the way it runs the After-School Recreation and Care program — ARC — today. No competition, no providers. Accountability runs through management, not contract: there is no competition to lose and no agreement to enforce. ARC's record shows what that has meant in practice. After years of City operation it reaches about 1,800 children, and its cost per child was last published in 2013. Nothing about in-house delivery requires smallness or silence. Nothing in it has prevented either.

The tandem model splits the work. The City buys the guarantee layer. Parks, Forestry and Recreation contributes space at permit prices, and its workforce — roughly 9,000 to 10,000 part-time recreation workers a year, about 80% of them aged 14 to 29 — feeds the junior layer for workers aged 16 to 24. Community organizations deliver the programming itself: the qualified staff who count toward the ratios, the program design, the neighbourhood relationships.

A note on tandem costs, because this is where plans like this usually start to bend. Tandem removes real duplication — paying market rent for rooms the City already owns, paying a contractor to recruit animators the City already employs. But it cannot beat the contract model on headline price, because the base price never charged those duplications in the first place. Space is already costed at permit rates — $200 per child per year in the elementary band, $150 in the middle band, not market rent and not zero. Wages are already benchmarked to the City's own ARC grid. So the gains from tandem are stated in words, never converted into invented dollars: avoided duplication, a ready hiring pipeline, better use of public rooms. No per-place figure below the modelled $3,680 appears in this comparison, and none should be quoted unless it is one day built bottom-up the way Section 8 builds the base price.

Four flags stay attached to tandem, in plain language. Whether guaranteed, ratio-bound program work sits inside existing collective-agreement scope is a determination for City staff and labour relations to make. This document cannot assert it, and the model should not be sold as if it were already settled. If a site fails, the agreements must say in advance whether the provider or the division answers — shared delivery with blurred accountability is worse than either clean model. Rooms and staff redeployed into guaranteed places stop doing something else, and that trade has to be named site by site. And ARC is both the proof of life and the scale warning: City staff can run a real place, and left without a guarantee layer, a real place stayed at 1,800 children.

> The guarantee is the product; who employs the animator is a delivery choice.

7. Three scales

Scale talk goes wrong when the denominator is soft. So the denominator comes first, from the census, and every option that follows is the same coverage rate applied to a different geography.

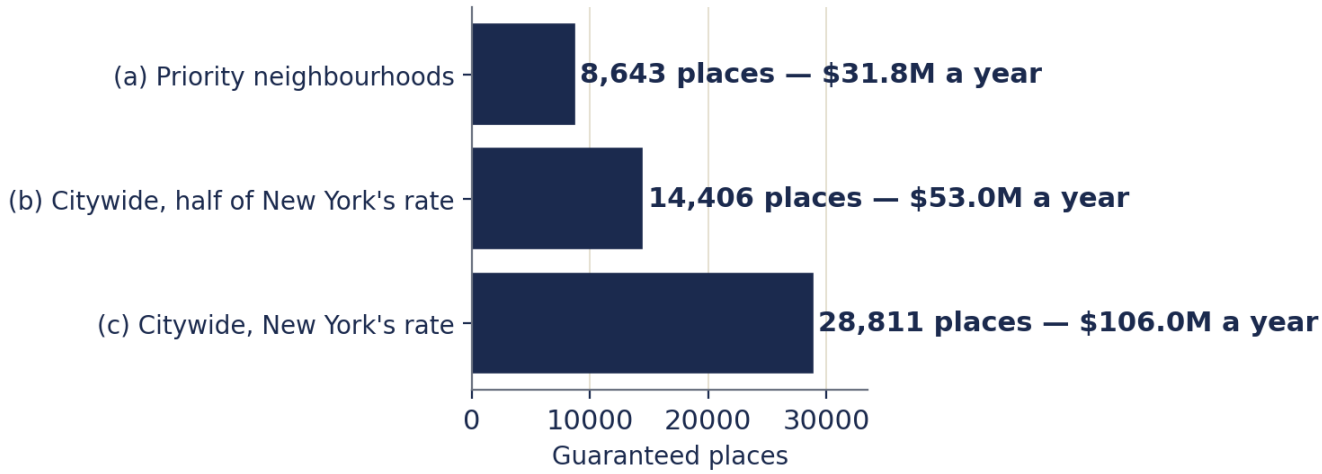
Toronto has 234,408 children aged 5 to 13 (City of Toronto / Statistics Canada, 2022). The count is built from the 2021 Census five-year bands: the 5-to-9 band, 129,040 children, counted in full; plus ages 10 to 13, 105,368 children — four-fifths of the 10-to-14 band. The bands sum exactly to the census backgrounder's published total for ages 0 to 14. Inside the total, elementary ages make up 66.3% and middle ages 33.7%.

New York's transferable number is a rate, not a count. Its 102,104 places against 830,714 resident children aged 5 to 13 (US Census Bureau, 2024) give a coverage rate of 12.29% — about one child in eight. That rate is what “New York-equivalent” means for a smaller city.

Option	Children in scope	Guaranteed places	Sites (modelled)	Cost per year (modelled)
(a) Priority neighbourhoods first	70,322	8,643	~79	$31.8M
(b) Citywide, half-scale	234,408	14,406	~131	$53.0M
(c) Full New York equivalent, citywide	234,408	28,811	~262	$106.0M

Option (a) rests on an assumption, and it is called one every time it appears: that **30%** of Toronto's children aged 5 to 13 live in the priority neighbourhoods. No government publishes that share. The direction is grounded — priority neighbourhoods run higher child shares than the city as a whole — but the number itself is assumed, and option (a) moves in direct proportion to it. At 25%, the priority system is 7,203 places and $26.5M a year. At 35%, it is 10,084 places and $37.1M a year. The first job of a design phase is the census count that replaces the assumption with a count.

Figure 3 — The same guaranteed place at three sizes: 8,643 places for $31.8M a year, 14,406 for $53.0M, or 28,811 for $106.0M

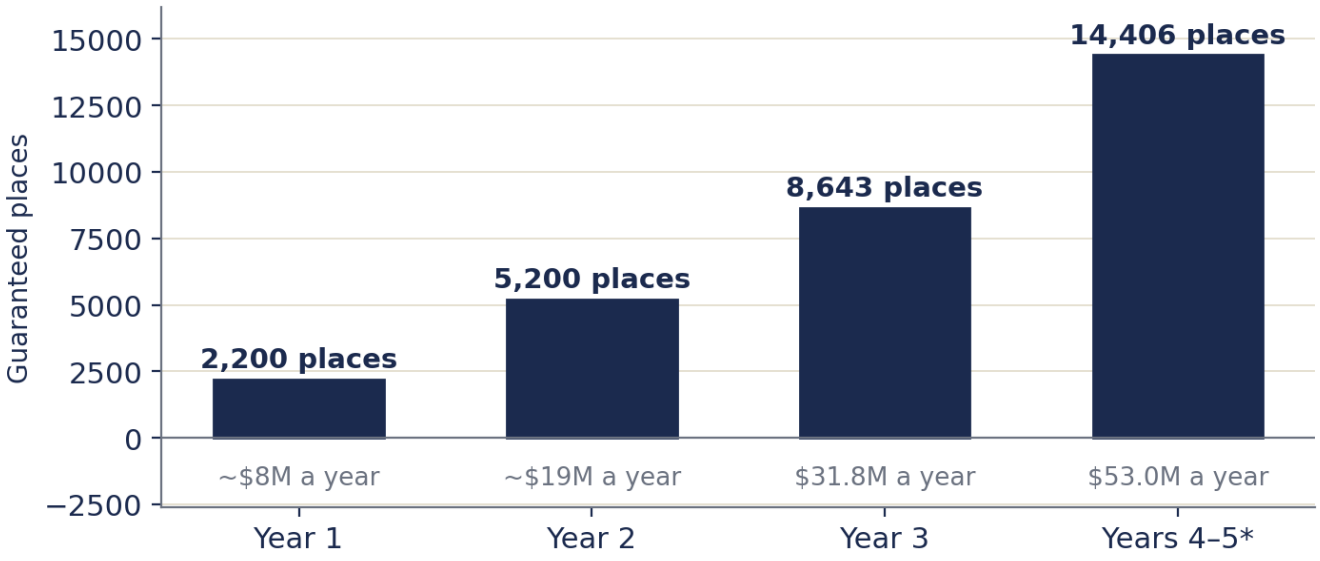


All three options buy places at the modelled blended price of $3,680 per place (Section 8) and at New York's coverage rate of 12.29% of children aged 5–13 within each geography (102,104 places among 830,714 children, American Community Survey 2024). Option (a) is restricted to the priority neighbourhoods; its 70,322 children in scope rest on the stated assumption that 30% of Toronto's 5–13 population lives there — at 25% the option is 7,203 places and $26.5 million, at 35% it is 10,084 places and $37.1 million. Options (b) and (c) use the census count for the whole city: 234,408 children aged 5–13 (2021 Census).

THE PHASE-IN

The phase-in is a ramp, not a switch. Year 1 stands up the buyer unit and the data system and opens about 2,200 places, at roughly $8M. Year 2 reaches about 5,200 places, at roughly $19M, and publishes the first results report. Year 3 completes the priority system at 8,643 places and $31.8M, with the mid-course evaluation published. Years 4 and 5 move to citywide half-scale at $53.0M only if Council chooses — a decision informed by the Year 3 evaluation, not an escalator built into this plan.

Figure 4 — The phase-in: three years to the priority system



Places and cost per year at the full year of each phase, at the modelled blended price of $3,680 per place. Years 1–3 build the priority-neighbourhood system (option (a), Section 7). *Years 4–5 move to citywide half-scale (option (b)) only if Council chooses, on the evidence of the Year 3 evaluation. Source: the design’s phase-in table (Section 9).

8. The price, built in the open

The price in this plan is a model. It is called a model every time it appears, because nobody has tendered it and pretending otherwise would hand critics their easiest win. What a model can do — what this one does — is print every assumption, so anyone can change one and watch the price move.

Assumption	Value	Basis
Front-line pay	$22.00/hr elementary; $23.00/hr middle	The City's own ARC site-coordinator posting rate (City of Toronto, 2026); program leaders post at $19.76
Site coordinator / site director	$30.00/hr / $38.00/hr	Model, benchmarked to City and non-profit postings
Payroll burden	+22%	Model
Paid time beyond program hours	×1.15	Model — set-up, clean-up, planning, training
Food	$1.75 per child per day (snack); $3.50 on summer days	Model
Supplies	$150 per child per year	Model
Space	$200 per child per year elementary; $150 middle	Model — permit rates; cheap, not free
Provider administration	+12%	Model
City system layer	+6%, including the 1.5% evaluation line	Model
Program days	194	Ontario school-year regulation: 187 teaching days, up to 7 PA days

The elementary build is the heart of it. Front-line staffing for 596 hours at 1 to 10 comes to $1,840 per place. Coordination adds $314, direction $132, food $340, and supplies and space $350 — a direct cost of $2,975. Provider administration and the City system layer take it to $3,532 for the school year. A summer block of 240 hours adds $1,389, for a year-round elementary price of $4,921. The middle band, at 540 hours and 1 to 15, prices at $2,604. The high-school bridge prices at $1,325; it is described for completeness and sits outside the three costed options. Blended at 66.3% elementary and 33.7% middle, with half of elementary places taking the summer add-on, the modelled price is **$3,680** per place.

Cross-check	Price	Toronto model
New York elementary, school year	US$4,800 ≈ C$6,701	$3,532
New York elementary, year-round	US$6,800 ≈ C$9,493	$4,921

Cross-check	Price	Toronto model
New York middle school (SONYC)	US$3,900 ≈ C$5,445	$2,604
New York blended	US$4,384 ≈ C$6,120	$3,680 — about 40% below

All conversions use US$1 = C$1.3961 (Bank of Canada, 2026), the daily rate for November 4, 2026. Toronto comes out below New York for stated reasons, none of them magic: fewer mandated hours, Toronto wage levels, and Toronto space costs at permit rates.

One Toronto check matters more than the currency table. ARC — the City's own registered after-school program — last published a cost of $2,556 per child, in 2013. Restated for inflation, that is about $3,600 in 2026 dollars, within roughly 2% of the modelled elementary price. The match is a sanity check on order of magnitude, not a proof of precision, and it always travels with its date attached: 2013, because the City stopped publishing the figure after that year.

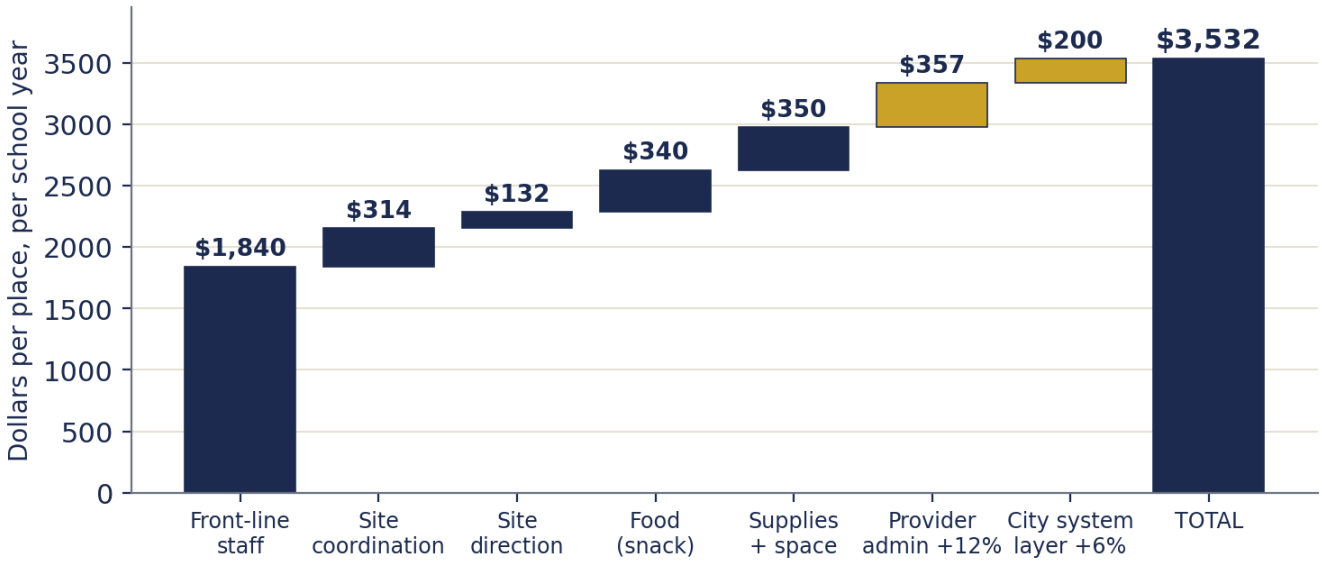
Sensitivity tells Council where its real choices sit. Raising elementary hours toward New York's package, to 800 school-year hours, lifts the elementary price to $4,461 — up 26%. Tightening the ratio to 1 to 8 lifts it to $4,078, up 15%. Paying front-line staff $25 an hour lifts it to $3,830, up 8%.

KEY FINDING

The price is moved by dose decisions — how many hours, how many children per adult — not by overhead assumptions. A council that wants New York’s dose can have it. It should vote for the price that comes with it, in the open.

One number is retired here, on purpose. Dividing Parks, Forestry and Recreation's $289.9M budget by its 483,000 registrations gives roughly “$600.” That figure prices a registration — one course sign-up, often a few hours, for a person of any age — not a child holding 596 guaranteed hours. It appears in this plan only so that nobody uses it as a cost. A registration is not a place.

Figure 5 — How the $3,532 price of one elementary place is built, line by line (school year)

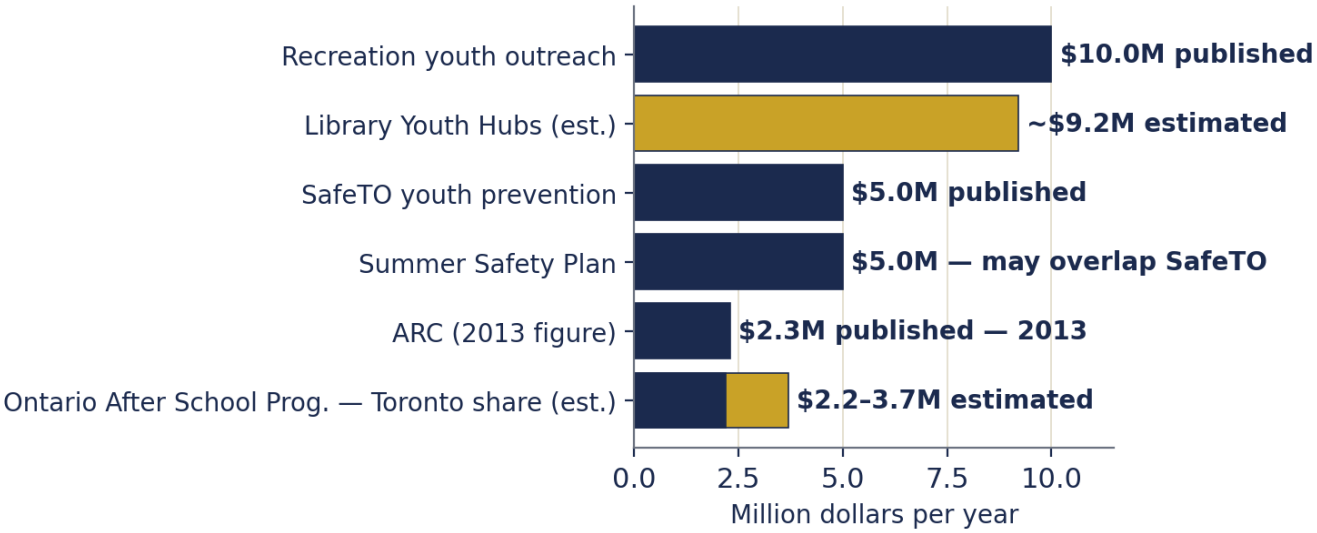


The elementary school-year build, per place: 596 program hours at one staff member to ten children, front-line pay at $22.00 an hour (the City’s ARC site-coordinator posting rate). Direct cost $2,975; provider administration at 12% adds $357; the City system layer at 6% adds $200; the design prints the resulting price as $3,532. Summer add-on $1,389; year-round elementary price $4,921; middle-school place $2,604; blended price $3,680. All figures are model lines from the cost build in this section — a model, stated as one.

9. The ledger and the verdict

Before anyone asks whether Toronto can afford a guaranteed system, count what Toronto already spends chasing the same effect: supervised, structured programming for school-age children outside school hours. The ledger counts only that effect, and it counts in tiers, so nothing rests on a hidden estimate.

Figure 6 — What Toronto already spends each year, stream by stream — the biggest single stream is $10.0M



The largest streams in the ledger, per year. Navy: published figures. Gold: estimates, labelled as in the ledger — the Youth Hubs figure is extrapolated from the published cost of a three-hub expansion ($0.887 million a year for three hubs); the Ontario After School Program's Toronto share is modelled at 15–25% of the province-wide $14.6 million, which the province does not break out by city. ARC is carried at its last published figure (2013). The Summer Safety Plan's $5 million may sit inside SafeTO's wider envelope; the overlap is unresolved in the published sources, which is why the published tier of the ledger is stated as $17–22 million. Two real streams — Toronto Community Housing and the school boards — spend amounts no published source counts, and are not in this figure.

Source line: City of Toronto, Toronto Public Library and Ontario published figures, as itemized in the ledger table in this section; the full stream-by-stream ledger is in the companion record document.

Tier	What goes in	Total per year
Published, like-for-like only	Figures anyone can point to in published documents	$17–22M — the $22.3M and $17.3M pair turns on whether the Summer Safety Plan's $5M sits inside SafeTO's envelope, which published sources do not resolve; both are printed
Published plus two labelled modelled components	Add Library Youth Hubs at ≈$9.2M, extrapolated from a published three-hub expansion unit, and Toronto's share of Ontario's After School Program at $2.2–3.7M, modelled because the province does not publish it	≈$29–35M

Tier	What goes in	Total per year
With ARC restated	ARC at modelled current scale instead of its last published 2013 figure	Toward ~$39M

WHERE THE PRIORITY SYSTEM FINDS ITS MONEY

The spread matters as much as the sum. The ledger names 16 streams, at least 10 funding streams, and 8 authorities. Each runs its own application cycle, eligibility rules, reporting format and definition of a unit. No two rows count the same thing. And across all of it, the number of guaranteed places — a named child promised a defined number of hours at a defined standard next September — is about 1,800.

Where the priority system finds its money

Source	Per year	Honest note
Parks, Forestry and Recreation youth envelope conversion	~$12M	Reallocation candidate — hard. A labour-relations and service-continuity negotiation, not a journal entry. The staff in that envelope are the natural site coordinators and monitors of the new system
Ontario After School Program, formalized Toronto allocation	~$3M	Negotiated transfer. The ask is naming Toronto's share of money the province already spends, not new provincial money
SafeTO and Community Partnership and Investment Program alignment	~$5M	Partial reallocation. Only the after-school-hours portion aligns with places; the rest stays in the protected grant layer
Federal streams	$0 in the base case	Episodic money never bases a standing system. Federal contributions count as acceleration, never as base
New City money — what remains	≈$12M	About 0.06% of the City's $18.9B operating budget (City of Toronto, 2026)

One exclusion is stated flatly. Children's Services' $1,672.5M is not in this stack and cannot be. It is child-care money flowing under federal-provincial rules, and it is not available for a school-age system no matter how large the number looks in a budget book. Any version of this proposal that “finds” its funding there is not being honest.

> Comparable money for categorically more guaranteed output. It is not shown to be cheaper — and the design does not need it to be.

The supports are plain. The envelopes are the same order of money: **$31.8M** for the priority system — at the stated 30% priority-share assumption of Section 7 — against roughly $29–35M identifiably spent now. The outputs are not the same category, which is why “cheaper for the same output” is undefined — the status quo does not produce the output being priced. What the guarantee itself costs, beyond program delivery, is the system layer of about 6%, roughly $1.9M a year at priority scale: the monitors, the data system and the evaluation whose absence is exactly why the current system's results cannot be stated.

Stress the numbers and the verdict bends without breaking. Under a harsh combination — New York-level dose and tighter ratios, with current spending read at its strictly published low end — the priority system rises toward ~$42M against ~$20M of provable spend: roughly double, for a guaranteed system against an unguaranteed patchwork, and the verdict holds in the form printed above. Push both breaks together — the priority share at 35% and the New York dose at once — and option (a) reaches ≈$48–52M, where the honest sentence changes: roughly double to two-and-a-half times provable current spending, for a categorically different product. In no version does consolidation pay for itself. Anyone who claims it does is overclaiming, and this plan does not.

For roughly what Toronto already spends — money that today guarantees a place to 1,800 children — the City can guarantee 8,643 places, publish the attendance, pay the providers on time, and be audited on all of it; the evidence supports exactly that promise, and this proposal makes no promise the evidence doesn't support.

10. What this plan will not claim

A plan earns trust by what it refuses to promise. This closing section states the limits plainly — what the evidence supports, what it does not, and what this proposal therefore does not say.

This plan does not promise test scores. No system-scale evaluation anywhere has shown that after-school provision raises them. New York's own evaluator found participants' test-score gains no different from matched non-participants (Policy Studies Associates, n.d.). What structured programs with trained, stable staff do improve, on the evidence, is engagement, school-day attendance and course progression. Those are the outcomes the funded evaluation will measure and publish.

This plan does not promise a percentage reduction in youth violence from after-school places, because no such estimate exists. What the record does establish is timing. Juvenile violent crime and victimization peak in the risky hours — 3 to 4 p.m. on school days. Supervision in those hours is the intervention aimed at them. Aim is not an effect size, and this plan does not dress it up as one.

The summer-jobs evidence is stronger, and this plan claims it at exactly its strength, and only for older youth. Assignment to a supported summer job cut violent-crime arrests by roughly **two-fifths** over 16 months in the original Chicago trial (Heller, 2014). Later and larger trials found smaller, less certain reductions, and the pooled post-program violence effect across studies is not statistically distinguishable from zero — so the durable claim is the direction, not the size. New York's lottery evidence found incarceration about 10% lower across all applicants — about 54% only among 19-to-21-year-olds, a qualification that travels with the figure every time — and deaths from external causes about one-fifth lower (Gelber, Isen and Kessler, 2014). None of it is evidence about ten-year-olds, and none of it is presented here as if it were.

Attendance is promised at levels that can be proved. Children attend roughly half the hours a place offers — in New York's evaluated middle-school expansion, an average of 236 of 540 hours. So the contract sets an 80% participation benchmark, publishes attended hours, and is judged on them. The arithmetic is honest about the gap between an offer and a dose: $5.60 per contracted hour, and about $7 per attended hour at the benchmark the contract enforces.

This is not a savings claim. Section 9 makes the point once and this section will not belabour it: comparable money, categorically more guaranteed output, and under harsh assumptions roughly double the strictly published spend. The case rests on what the money buys, not on a promise that it costs less.

Two labels stay on, in plain sight. The price is a model — $3,680 per place, built line by line from published wage postings in 2026–27 dollars, not a tendered or observed price. And the 30% priority share is an assumption — no government publishes it, the sensitivities at 25% and 35% are printed in Section 7, and replacing it with a census count is the design phase's first job.

Toronto has adopted this idea before, in words: the 2012 Middle Childhood Strategy named the same patchwork, in the same language, and stopped at eighteen sites (City of Toronto, 2012). What this design adds is not another diagnosis. It is a named buyer, a costed unit, committed money, and an owner whose name is on the results.

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