

Notes for Remarks  
by His Worship Rob Ford, Mayor of Toronto  
12 January, 2012

Good morning everyone. Today the Executive Committee will consider the city's 2012 budget.

This budget is the result of an unprecedented core service review process. We heard from 1,142 deputants and over 1,200 participants at 12 public meetings. We received more than 13,000 surveys. I've spoken with hundreds of residents from every corner of Toronto – from every walk of life. Councillors have too. We held more than 100 hours of debate at Committees and Council. And, I bet, there are still a few more to come.

The people of Toronto have been very clear about what they want. First and foremost, they want us to stop the waste, to reduce city expenses, and to hold the line on taxes. And, yes, they want us to protect those who cannot protect themselves and to respect their cherished institutions. They know we face difficult decisions. They expect us to be tough enough to make them.

For years, City spending was out of control. Every year-end surplus was used to justify a mad-rush of new spending the next year. That new spending required new taxes, which created new surpluses. Each new surplus was used to justify more spending and more taxes. It went on and on.

\$700 million worth of new TTC streetcars were ordered – with no money set aside to pay for them.

In a word – it was irresponsible. Responsible people do not order things they can't afford. Responsible people do not live beyond their means. Responsible people don't borrow billions hoping their children will pay it back. Responsible governments shouldn't either.

For the first time in years – Toronto has a plan to eliminate one-time spending by next year. This year we will reduce our one-time draw on reserves from \$346 million in 2011 down to about \$80 million in 2012. In 2013 we should need no surpluses – No one-time money to balance our budget. That is an amazing accomplishment. But we will only achieve it, if we stay the course this year.

We are now projecting a \$154 million surplus from 2011. That's good news for taxpayers. But it's only good news if we use that money responsibly. The responsible thing to do – is to put every penny of that \$154 million towards paying for the TTC's new vehicles.

The world is going through tough economic times. Canada has done better than most countries, but Toronto is not insulated from the global economy. Average families feel the pinch every day. Average people are not getting raises.

For months, I've been talking with people across the city. I believe most people can afford a 2.5 per cent tax increase – but just barely. I know they cannot afford a penny more. They need us to make decisions that keep their taxes affordable.

There has been a lot of fear mongering about this budget. But the reality is, this a reasonable, responsible budget. The modest changes in this budget will adjust our spending to a sustainable level.

For what it's worth, we are not alone in this. Both the provincial and federal governments are preparing to follow our lead. The provincial government may have to trim some of its programs by 30%. The federal government has already started a similar process to slow its spending growth.

Ladies and Gentlemen, our 2012 budget is a smart budget. It's a reasonable budget. It's a responsible budget. Our taxpayers – our residents – deserve a government that sets priorities and lives within its means.

We were elected to do just that. Thank you.