



TO: Executive Committee

CC: Aboriginal Affairs Committee
Uzma Shakir

FROM: Councillor Layton, Frances Sanderson, Co-Chairs Aboriginal Affairs Advisory Committee.

SUBJECT: Budget cuts and the implications for the Statement of Commitment to the Aboriginal Community

The Aboriginal Affairs Committee is strongly opposed to the proposed budget cuts, particularly those having a direct impact on Toronto's Aboriginal community. While the Aboriginal Affairs Committee agrees with the concept of finding efficiencies, many members manage sizable service agencies and understand the importance of cost effective service delivery, several of the proposed services changes will have significant negative impacts on the Aboriginal community and in those areas we would recommend that the City maintain current service levels.

In June 2010, Toronto City Council adopted the **Statement of Commitment** in which it proclaimed that the City of Toronto would work with the Aboriginal community to improve public awareness, employment opportunities, while increasing the community's prospects relating to its participation on agencies, boards and commissions, all the while working to promote capacity building for members of the First Nations, Métis, and Inuit community.

The Aboriginal Affairs Committee is concerned that with the proposed cuts there will be a devastating long-term negative effect on the community. The proposed cuts call into question the integrity that was pledged to Toronto's Aboriginal Community through the declaration of the city's **Statement of Commitment**.

Many of the proposed cuts to services will severely hamper capacity building programs for the community and to slash these programs now through such nearsighted actions is to take a huge step backward in terms of the relationship between the City and the Community.

One of the city's major commitments was to create training opportunities through the City Manager's Office – Equity, Diversity and Human Rights Division for the Toronto Public Service to learn about and appreciate the rich history and heritage of Toronto's Aboriginal constituents. The education of staff and services would emphasize the current-day impact that the city has on Elders, children and all Aboriginal partners. With a reduction in staff training, attaining this goal is almost impossible and shows a lack of respect in developing a meaningful relationship with our community.

In addition, budgetary cuts will make it increasingly difficult to meet the city's commitment to implement employment practices to ensure that opportunities for employment are accessible and actually exist for Aboriginal people, while increasing the number of Aboriginal employees at all occupation levels.

The proposed 10% reduction in the Community Partnership and Investment Program results in a reduction of 138 art grants, 58 public health grants (mostly in child nutrition), and 83 community service grants. Many Aboriginal focused organizations receive CPIP funding and these service cuts would directly conflict with the city's commitment to strengthen the capacity of Aboriginal organizations and associations to plan, lead and deliver initiatives designed to improve the lives of Toronto's Native community.

The closing of three shelters, 100 beds, means severe hardship, dislocation and ultimately homelessness for the most vulnerable of Toronto's population. These shelters house seniors, youths, adults, male and female dealing with addictions, mental health and domestic violence. It is crucial that these facilities remain intact to provide essential services for those most at risk.

We must also not forget the impacts of childcare centres, the elimination of rent subsidies to centres housed in school board buildings and the devastating effects these will cause on family life and employment opportunities.

Further, the increase in transit fares and the decrease in service will negatively affect all low income Torontonians and particularly Aboriginal residents who depend on our transit system to safely get to school, work, home and support services/institutions.

The Aboriginal Affairs Committee would like the Executive Committee and Toronto City Council to consider, seriously, the impacts that will be realized by our community. With a large population living below the poverty line, Toronto's Aboriginal people will be disproportionately impacted by the elimination of services caused by the budget cuts.

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