



Eric Cashmore

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DEPUTATION

To: City of Toronto; Community Development and Recreation Committee

Date: April 17, 2014

Location: City Hall, Committee Room 1 - 100 Queen Street West, Toronto

Background documents:

1) **One-Time Provincial Grant Funding to Support Transition to the Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative (CHPI)**

City of Toronto, January 7, 2013

2) **Implementing the Housing Stabilization Fund: Update on Progress to Date**

City of Toronto, April 5, 2013

3) **Housing Stabilization Fund: Updates and New Housing Allowance**

City of Toronto, September 4, 2013

4) **2013 Year-End Report on Housing Stabilization Fund**

City of Toronto, April 2, 2013

This deputation is given as a follow up deputation I gave to this committee on Monday March 10, 2014 at Metro Hall Room 309.

This written deputation is being submitted as supporting documentation to my oral deputation, deliverable to city hall on April 17th. The facts contained herein supports the arguments made in my oral submissions.

This deputation has been developed for public distribution. In addition to being submitted to the "Community and Recreation Committee" of the City of Toronto, this deputation has also been distributed to:

www.facebook.com/eric.cashmore

Ontario Coalition Against Poverty

Toronto HIV Network

Toronto People with AIDS Foundation

FIFE House

Attention: Community Development and Recreation Committee members

I'm delivering my deputation today in an effort to highlight the importance that the Housing Stabilization Fund continues to operate at its fullest potential. As you know, more than 4 million dollars has already been cut from this fund. This is vital money that could be used to house the countless homeless people in the city of Toronto.

For the past year, I have been traveling into Toronto from Pickering Ontario using my own funds and resources to assist homeless people with getting off the street and into stable, safe and sometimes supportive housing. The best resource I've had at my disposal in doing this is the Housing Stabilization Fund. To date, I've been successful in getting 33 people off the streets and into apartments.

One thing that is consistent is that most people who are on the street and **receiving either Ontario Works (OW) or Ontario Disability (ODSP)** are NOT aware of the fund. This means that case workers are not informing clients, specifically the most vulnerable, about ESSENTIAL funding that could get them into a much better living situation.

According to the above mentioned documents, it is proven that 89% of those who DO apply to the fund ARE in fact eligible. These documents also show that of those who apply, the average amount that is actually awarded is only between \$445.00 to \$619.00. These figures worry me when a single person's maximum allowable access to the fund is \$1600.00. It is my belief that the city has taken the direction of minimizing a person's awarded amount rather than denying them completely. In doing this, the city is able to maintain that they are approving the majority of the applications they receive, even if they are still not awarding enough for people to achieve the stable housing they applied for.

It should also be noted that the number of homeless and/or marginally housed people in the city of Toronto is in an all-time high. I counted the number of what I call "obviously homeless" people between Church and Wellesley Street to Metro hall on my way to my deputation on March 10th. My total was 19 people. Who knows how many people I may have passed who have been couch surfing or staying in a shelter and do not show "obvious signs of homelessness"

Another major issue with the ADMINISTRATION of the fund is the process used for appeals. On the city of Toronto's Website entitled "Policies and Procedures: Housing Stabilization Fund" under the heading "HSF review" it states the following:

"If a request for HSF is denied, the office will mail a letter. To request a review, write a letter to the office explaining why you disagree. The office manager will assess the request and give their decision verbally. At that point, the decision is final"

In my opinion, this poses a few issues:

- 1) Some people may not be able to properly write a letter due to mental health or other reasons
- 2) Some people may not understand the appeal process
- 3) Some people may feel overwhelmed and may not bother to appeal

It is my opinion that people should be directed to their COMMUNITY LEGAL AID CLINIC instead of encouraged to pursue an appeal on their own. Any communication or transaction between an individual and his/her government, or a representative of his/her government is a legal issue. For this reason people should not be encouraged to pursue these matters on their own, but instead should be encouraged to seek legal advice and representation.

My recommendations to city council in regards to this fund are as follows:

- 1) That the city restore the \$4 million that has been cut from this fund
- 2) That the city train Ontario Works and Ontario Disability Support Program Case Workers on how to better inform their clients, specifically those who are homeless or under housed about the fund and how to access it
- 3) That the city stop partially approving applicants who apply to the fund and give greater consideration to an individual's **overall needs to obtain stable housing**
- 4) That the city change its policy so that individuals are encouraged to seek out their community legal aid clinic in the event that they are denied approval of their application, rather than being encouraged to write to the fund administrators on their own.

I'd like to take this time to thank you for your time and consideration of my deputation.

ERIC CASHMORE
April 14, 2014
Toronto, Ontario

