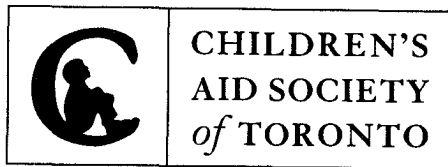


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*Because children depend on all of us*

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February 2, 2015

To: Chair and City of Toronto Budget Committee

As the Supervisor of Community Development and Prevention, I am presenting this deputation on behalf of the Children's Aid Society of Toronto. CAS Toronto is a not-for-profit agency, funded by the province of Ontario to keep children safe, strengthen families and provide alternative care for children who are unable to safely remain in their homes. Last year our organization provided services to approximately 4% of families in Toronto: over 23,820 children and over 11, 000 families.

We believe that the City budget and decisions made can play a protective factor for children and families and impact on strengthening families and communities, and preventing child abuse and neglect. The costs of child maltreatment are high: these children and youth are more likely to experience teen pregnancy, substance abuse, and physical and mental health problems. According to a 2003 study by the Law Commission of Ontario, health, legal and societal costs of child maltreatment in Canada are \$16 billion a year.

We care about the city budget because city policies, programs and services affect the living conditions of families which in turn make a difference to the health and safety of children and risks of child abuse and neglect. Budget decisions that are favourable to support the determinants of health also provide supports to families and improve child well-being.

When thinking about the Budget decisions we ask that you consider the following information:

- Children in families lacking safe and secure housing are more likely to come into our care based on research we carried out with the University of Toronto.
- Children in families that lack basic supports like child care and recreation are also at increased risk of coming in to contact with CAS.
- Children in families that live in poverty are more likely to experience neglect or maltreatment
- Toronto has the highest child poverty rate of any city in Canada
- Poverty has adverse costs in terms of child development and future opportunities. There is evidence that children in low income neighbourhoods are less ready to learn upon school entry, and less likely to meet provincial test standards in Grade 3 and Grade 6.
- Poverty costs us all: about \$ 10-14 billion dollars in lost provincial and federal government revenue in Ontario alone.

Our organization considers poverty reduction as a vital area for development in Toronto. One year ago, the CEO of the CAS Toronto joined other leaders calling for Toronto action plan on poverty reduction. We applaud the Mayor and city councillors for the following actions:

- Naming “poverty reduction” as a top priority in this budget
- Your pledge to develop a comprehensive poverty reduction strategy for Toronto

We also appreciate the commitment of \$21 Million in this budget to expand shelters, create new after-school programs, and provide free transit for children, among other actions. We also applaud the plans for an LGBTIQ shelter beds and much needed shelter enhancements.

However, \$21 Million is not a bold investment to jump-start poverty reduction in our City when so many children and families and individuals are suffering the impacts. The funds earmarked this year are less than one-half of one percent of the city’s \$11.5 Billion budget.

Furthermore, the proposed budget falls short in a number of specific areas. We are concerned that cuts in this budget will further constrain the Welcome Policy to help low income families access recreation, and this budget reverses commitments to create three additional youth spaces in 2015.

In addition, investments are missing in key areas including: affordable housing, subsidized child care, and student nutrition programs.

**A key City and Budget question remains: Where do we find the dollars to make the necessary investments in poverty reduction?**

Here are five ways we think you can move ahead on reducing poverty in this time of fiscal constraint:

- 1) Don't assume that Toronto has a spending problem rather than a revenue problem.** Property taxes are the lowest in the GTA, and have risen by less than inflation over the past 5 years. Of course any raise in taxes must consider low income people and ensure there is information and targeted access to the City's rebate system.
- 2) Identify policy decisions that could reduce poverty that don't require a lot of money** (inclusionary zoning, rooming houses across city, social procurement on all infrastructure projects, stronger fair wage policies on city contracts)
- 3) Review budgets and shift more funds to prevention** (e.g. child care, recreation, jobs, eviction prevention) so **that fewer funds are needed for emergency /crisis services** (e.g. policing, shelters).
- 4) Over the longer term make municipal taxes fairer (move from a less regressive model of municipal taxation so that taxes relate to annual income and people with more wealth actually pay more, and people with less wealth and income pay less.** It's probably too late for this budget. However, Council should immediately strike an expert/stakeholder panel to review the fairness of current municipal taxes - and potential new taxes - will the goal of adequately funding city programs and services in an equitable and sustainable way. This will mostly likely require working with the province to fix the regressive nature of property taxes, which right now hits lower income people the hardest, exacerbating income inequality in our city.

**5) Engage residents in advocacy for ‘uploading’ costs of social services and social housing. The City and other municipalities need to combine forces to address the impact of downloading on services in our communities.**

Thank you for your time. The CAST wants to continue to work with the City , community partners and residents on solutions to address poverty reduction. We want to ensure that actions lead to positive impacts on the lives children, youth and families. We all know that a lack of action is not acceptable while so many children, families and other households will face serious risks and fall further behind.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ann Fitzpatrick". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent loop at the end of the word "Fitzpatrick".

Ann Fitzpatrick, BSW, MSW  
Supervisor of Community Development and Prevention Program