

Budget Committee - submission on the 2012 budget

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Attachments: HAN and WCOHH 2012 budget deputation.pdf

Hello,

I am writing to submit a written deputation from Housing Action Now and the West Coalition on Housing and Homelessness to the Budget and Executive Committees. This written deputation follows from our oral presentation on Thursday.

Many thanks,
Beth

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2012 City Budget: Recipe for Expansion of Homelessness
Deputation to the City of Toronto Budget Committee
Submitted by: Housing Action Now and the West Coalition on Housing and Homelessness
Thursday, December 8, 2011

Thank you for the opportunity to speak today. My name is Said Dirie and this is Beth Wilson. I am a community worker with the Children's Aid Society of Toronto and Beth is the senior researcher with Social Planning Toronto. We are here today representing two housing and homelessness networks – Housing Action Now and the West Coalition on Housing and Homelessness.

We believe that this budget is a recipe for the expansion of homelessness in Toronto. The most obvious illustration of this is the proposed closure of three homeless shelters. As the committee heard yesterday, these shelters are not merely services but they are home – home to some of our most vulnerable neighbours, who live in poverty and with mental health issues, including senior women and men. They are also home to women who have escaped violence. These shelters provide specialized services that are not available elsewhere. Violence against women shelters in Toronto, for example, are always at capacity. The services available do not meet the needs of these residents. In fact, we need more specialized shelters not fewer. Are we a city that shuts down homeless shelters for women escaping violence, and senior men and women with mental health issues – particularly in the face of further economic downturn? We hope we are not that city.

The budget proposes cuts to the Affordable Housing Office just as the City prepares to take on the administration of \$108 million in new housing funding. The Affordable Housing Office is staffed with people who have the knowledge and expertise to support the successful development of new affordable housing that is desperately needed in our communities. We believe that cutting funding from this office just as the demand for its services is about to increase is penny-wise and pound-foolish.

We also understand that the budget contains cuts to Shelter, Support and Housing including cuts to affordable housing, to fund the repair of rundown housing, to TCHC and to social housing and a substantial reduction in the target for the creation of new affordable homes.

This budget, as it stands, will make an already critical situation worse. In the short- and long-run, these cuts will cost us, financially, in terms of health and well-being and, we fear, in the possibility of lives lost.

We can choose to be a much better city. Fortunately City Council has options. The City's 2011 surplus should not be stashed away when the community needs are significant and immediate.

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