



WoodGreen Community Services Deputation to Budget Committee on the 2013 Budget December 10, 2012

WoodGreen Community Services is a non-profit, multi-service organization providing services including child care, seniors support, housing, employment programs, homelessness services, immigrant services, and mental and developmental health services. For 75 years WoodGreen has served the residents of east Toronto and now operates in 34 locations, serving nearly 40,000 individuals and families every year.

WoodGreen recognizes the difficult decisions and restraint that have gone into the development of the 2013 operating budget. However, we have significant concerns about the impacts that the budget as it is now proposed will have on Toronto's most vulnerable residents.

Among the most serious of these concerns is the freezing—for the second consecutive year—of the budgets of the Community Partnership and Investment Programs. Agencies like WoodGreen rely on CPIP funding to deliver services to populations in need. CPIP investments enable WoodGreen to operate elderly persons centres; provide Meals on Wheels and other services to seniors; offer after-school programs for vulnerable children and youth; and run summer day programs. Costs for these programs continue to increase but our ability to deliver them is constrained by flat-lined budgets. We have grown adept at doing more with less but there is a point at which service access and quality will inevitably suffer. We are concerned that this year's proposed budget will bring us to that point.

WoodGreen is not unique in feeling the impact of stagnant funding. Throughout the city agencies, many of them much smaller than WoodGreen, are struggling to survive as resources tighten. These pressures come at a time when employment is becoming more precarious and income inequality is increasing.



CPIP investments in our communities support over 2,500 projects, create at least 2,000 jobs in local neighbourhoods, and mobilize over 90,000 volunteers providing over one million hours of their time in building healthy and inclusive communities.

CPIP attracts almost ten times this amount or \$430 million in other investments to our communities from the provincial and federal governments, business and individual donations, participant fees, earned income and foundation contributions.

We urge Budget Committee to follow the recommendation from the sector and revise the draft budget to recommend an increase of at least \$2.8 million in the 2013 CPIP budget, to account for the rate of inflation and population growth in the city. This would relieve some of the pressures agencies are facing and would bring greater stability to the community services sector, which plays a vital role in improving health and well-being in this city.

There are other aspects of concern with the proposed budget including the reduction of shelter nights, particularly as global warming has not yet made sleeping outside a safe activity. We also recognize that a significant portion of the cuts to Housing and Shelter Supports are the result of actions – or inactions – by the federal and provincial governments. We urge councilors to continue to press for an affordable housing strategy and resources to support it.

We would like however to focus on another funding cut that has been transferred to you from another order of government. The provincial government has eliminated the Community Start-Up and Maintenance Benefit which helped families receiving social assistance to secure and retain housing as well as to deal with emergency situations. With the elimination of this benefit, Toronto will receive nearly \$15 million less from the Province, reducing the City's ability to assist residents who are facing housing related crises. Through our work with vulnerable populations WoodGreen is very aware that the lack of affordable housing coupled with inadequate social



assistance rates have already created an income security crisis for many Torontonians. We urge City Council to ensure that sufficient funding is available to compensate for the cutback in provincial funding.

Adjusting expenditures to reflect increasing need is just one side of the budget equation. Toronto faces a variety of challenges in maintaining its social and physical infrastructure. To ensure that we are able to meet those challenges and remain a livable and compassionate city, City Council must consider new and sustainable revenue measures that will help the City grow and prosper. We encourage Council to prepare for the future by initiating a thoughtful community dialogue on how a growing city can be financed. There is much wisdom among the deputations now being made

As always we appreciate the opportunity to contribute to discussion of budget priorities and encourage Budget Committee and City Council to adopt an operating plan that reflects the needs of all Torontonians.

Thank you very much.

Diane Dyson

Director, Research & Public Policy

On behalf of the Advocacy Committee of the WoodGreen Board of Directors