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**RE: Item 21.4 Response to the Service Efficiency Study
Recommendations for Hostel Services**

Social Planning Toronto (SPT) is a non-profit community organization engaged in research, policy analysis, community development and civic engagement aimed at improving the quality of life of Toronto residents. SPT's work focuses on poverty reduction with an emphasis on income security, good jobs, affordable housing and strong public education.

SPT strongly urges the committee to reject recommendations to contract out cleaning, food, and shelter services that are currently being proposed. As an organization that has researched and advocated for solutions to the rise in precarious employment and income inequality in the city of Toronto, we recognize that contracting out secure, decently paid jobs will not only hurt workers, but shelter users and the public as well.

Shelter work can be challenging and stressful. Every worker has a critical role to play, and should be properly compensated and resourced in order to perform their duties, while providing for vulnerable clients the best quality of care and service that can be offered. Contracting out staff sends a loud and clear signal to these workers that their work and time is not valued.

It's clear from the consultant's report that if there is any cost savings to be had, it will come at the expense of workers, with low wage, precarious work replacing secure living wage jobs. As illustrated in the United Way Toronto and McMaster University's recent report, *It's More than Poverty*, over a quarter of Toronto workers have precarious employment, with nearly another quarter in vulnerable employment situations. As well, one in four residents lives in poverty.

The City of Toronto has an important role to play to stem the tide of growing poverty and precarious employment. City Council can make a choice to counter and not contribute to this disturbing trend. We think the City of Toronto can and should be a model employer, one that respects its workers, and provides decent living wages and good working conditions. Contracting out good jobs is not part of that equation.

Contracting out vital services including cleaning and food services in shelters also raises important concerns regarding service quality and public health. Contracting out in hospitals, for example, has been linked to increased risk for the spread of infections and contagious disease resulting from improper cleaning. Increased public health risks affect shelter users, workers and the broader community. People who are homeless already experience high rates of chronic illness. We need to ensure that this vulnerable group is not further compromised by maintaining high quality cleaning and food service standards.

We also urge you to reject the contracting out of the Fort York transitional men's shelter. It is surprising that this shelter has been centred out for possible contracting out. In fact, a few years ago, the Fort York Residence was centred out for its excellence in service delivery.

In November 2006, the City of Toronto received a prestigious national housing award from the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) in recognition of the excellent and innovative care being provided by the Fort York Residence. CMHC recognized this City-run shelter for addressing "the root causes of homelessness". The City was proud of its accomplishment, as it should be. Shirley Hoy, the City Manager at the time, remarked: "We're honoured that CMHC would recognize this imaginative combination of shelter, housing and employment support services as a best practice in affordable housing. We're very pleased to share our experience with other communities across the country ...". Now recommendations have come forward to disrupt that high level of quality service.

We urge committee members to reject the recommendations for contracting out of shelter services. It is not worth the price we will pay.

John Campey
Executive Director