

April 23, 2013

RE: Item 31.12 Quality Jobs, Living Wages and Fair Wages in Toronto

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.

As an organization that has actively worked to highlight issues of poverty and precarious employment in the City of Toronto, we are pleased that the Committee is taking long overdue steps to update its fair wage policy as well as ensuring that it is updated regularly to reflect the rising cost of living in the city. However, we are concerned that the proposed wage increases do not provide workers and their families a means to maintain an adequate standard of living, especially when many of these employment positions are rarely full-time hours when they become contracted out. The wages proposed for many of the positions such as cleaners and security guards, will still result in workers continually falling at or below the poverty line (using the Low-Income Cut off Measure).

As one of the members of the United Way Toronto & McMaster University research team looking at the growing prevalence of precarious employment in Toronto and surrounding regions, we know that the impacts of low-wages and insecure work not only impact households, but entire communities as well. Family breakdowns, poor physical and mental health, reliance on food banks, insufficient income to help support children's education and extracurricular activities, all have negative consequences on the well-being of our neighbourhoods.

As Social Planning Toronto is one of the member organizations of the recently launched Campaign to Increase the Minimum Wage, calling for the provincial government to immediately increase the minimum wage to \$14 an hour, so that workers who work full-time, year round, should not have to live in poverty, we feel that the City has a key leadership role to play in not further contributing to the increased income polarization that is dividing the city into the "haves" and "have-nots". We therefore recommend and support the adoption of a living wage for such positions.



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We also wish to voice our support to halt the practice of contracting out services without Council oversight until there are comprehensive job assessment tools and evaluation measures in place to properly ensure that we are not supporting the push of workers into low-wage, poor quality jobs. The City should maintain its oversight until such mechanisms are developed.

We understand the constraints in regards to stretched municipal resources; however, we feel that the brunt of cost-cutting measures should not be upon the most vulnerable of workers, nor should the City be enabling and facilitating the push towards insecure, low-paid work that is already threatening the social and economic fabric of Toronto. This will only end up costing the city more in the long-term.

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