

**CITY OF TORONTO BUDGET 2017**

**CITY COUNCIL BUDGET COMMITTEE**

**ON THE POVERTY REDUCTION STRATEGY, ENDING HOMELESSNESS,  
AND MORE SUPPORT FOR SOCIAL SERVICES**

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## **Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Toronto**

CATHOLIC CHARITIES of the Archdiocese of Toronto through its twenty-six member agencies provides outreach and support that improves the lives of people in communities in Toronto, Peel, York and Durham regions as well as Dufferin and Simcoe counties.

For over one hundred years, CATHOLIC CHARITIES has been providing leadership and raising awareness about issues that affect vulnerable families and individuals. We draw on CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING and our desire is to build a more just society, while safeguarding the dignity of every person. We also draw strength from the Archdiocese of Toronto and its more than 1.8 million Catholics.

Guided by our Faith and the Social Teachings of the Catholic Church, we know that ending poverty and homelessness are essential to safeguarding the basic human dignity of all people. As Pope Francis has said: *“Each individual Christian and every community is called to be an instrument of God for the liberation and promotion of the poor, and for enabling them to be fully a part of society. This demands that we be docile and attentive to the cry of the poor and to come to their aid.”* APOSTOLIC EXHORTATION, *Evangelii Gaudium*, No. 187.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

We appreciate the opportunity to provide input on issues of housing and social services related to the 2017 City of Toronto Budget. Catholic Charities’ member agencies daily deal with issues stemming from poverty, persistent homelessness and people suffering from mental illness, violence and abuse. Our recommendations reflect our concerns and those of our member agencies.

With the final budget proposal scheduled for approval by City Council in February, it is imperative that in the budgetary process the most vulnerable in our community do not lose services on which they depend. While we understand the need by the city to close a \$91-million gap in its operating budget, the across-the-board request of all city departments to cut 2.6% from their department budgets from the Mayor’s Office will have a very negative impact on low-income and vulnerable people. An across-the-board cut to services will always adversely affect those most in need yet least able to protect them.

### **❖ Poverty Reduction**

There needs to be an increase, not a decrease, in investment in the City’s poverty reduction strategy (PRS). While over \$100 million is marked for the PRS, the proposed PRS requires some \$54 million in the operating budget and \$64.73 million in the capital budget.

These are not new or even enhanced services, however, they represent financial inputs to maintain existing services and some new programs introduced in 2016. There is a need for \$3.676 million for new and enhanced services. We believe it is important in the budget process to identify those areas that are resource rich and cut them back to invest in programs for the most vulnerable.

Cutting social services will negatively affect directly disadvantaged and low-income people in our city who rely on these programs and social services.

We need to refrain from cuts to such things as community grants, school nutrition programs and community homelessness prevention, shelters and housing. We must instead continue to move forward to end waiting lists for childcare and affordable housing. Budgets that cut deeply into social services always cause near irreparable harm to a city for years to come.

❖ **Homelessness and Housing**

With over 97,000 households currently on waiting lists, there is still an enormous need for investment of significant resources to end chronic homelessness in the City of Toronto through the development of badly needed social, supportive and affordable housing units.

Once again, we must underscore our concern that making cuts to balance the budget through significant cuts to shelter, support and housing, transitional housing, while at the same time eliminating the homeless prevention program, will make for greater problems. Housing is essential for ending the cycle of poverty of many people, and it contributes to stability of families.

It runs contrary to the spirit of provincial housing legislation that has as its focus over the next decade the chronically homeless; youth; Indigenous; and, people transitioning out of social service situations.

❖ **Use of Inclusionary Zoning**

Catholic Charities was pleased to see ***inclusionary zoning*** adopted by the province as part of the *Promoting Affordable Housing Act*. It is something for which we have been pressing the provincial government for a very long time.

The Province knows well that it must invest in cities and municipalities, because they cannot implement programs to provide more affordable housing in isolation. They cannot do it without other governmental investment.

We would hope that the City of Toronto will use this welcome tool to provide more affordable housing. It has the potential to ensure that affordable housing units will be an integral part of any residential development. The legislation leaves implementation and use to local municipalities to determine.

**CONTACT**

FOR FURTHER ENQUIRIES OR INFORMATION

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