



Housing Action Now's Comment on the 2018 Budget Process - Budget Directions and Schedule Tuesday May 9, 2017

Housing Action Now (HAN) is a coalition of Toronto residents and community organizations that advocates for safe, decent and affordable housing for all Torontonians. The following is our feedback regarding the 2018 Budget Process - Budget Directions and Schedule:

Mayor John Tory was elected on a promise that he would not cut services. City Council has committed to reducing poverty.

Yet, last year's budget resulted in cuts to services, the raising of user fees, the closure of hundreds of TCHC units, and shelters so overcrowded that homeless people were turned away and literally left to die (in spite of a promise to finally reach the 90% occupancy target). With the 2017 budget, Council effectively voted to cut services, make the city less affordable for middle and low-income people, and maintain poverty in Toronto. Yet again, Toronto's elected officials demanded the City find "savings," and Toronto's low-income people were required to pay for them.

The report being considered by Budget Committee today recommends freezing next year's operating budget for all departments. Freezing budgets is the equivalent of cutting budgets by the rate of inflation.

This will necessarily translate into a further cut to services that are already in decline to due to inadequate funding. The result will be the perpetuation and worsening of current problems, including:

- Poverty
- Unaffordability of living in the city
- Homelessness
- Preventable deaths

We ask that you start thinking beyond the next election and consider the kind of city we are going to leave to our children. Are we going to leave them with a city they can't afford to live in? A city that is literally falling apart, where social conflict, homelessness and poverty is rampant?

It's time to start investing in Toronto, in its residents and in its future. We can't afford more cuts. The city is being starved to death through financial neglect.

As you manage the city's finances for this year and future years, please remember that you were elected to make this city better, not to oversee its decline. Toronto is a wealthy city and has many ways to raise funds to finance the City's operations. Please use them.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input into this year's budget direction.

Melissa Goldstein,
Chair, Housing Action Now