

City Budget Deputation

January 10, 2017

Herman Ellis / Acting Executive Director / Scadding Court Community Centre

My name is Herman Ellis and I'm the Program Director and Acting Executive Director at Scadding Court Community Centre. We are located in Ward 20, and serve both our local community and residents from across the City. Thank you for the opportunity to speak today and share our thoughts about the proposed 2017 budget.

Rather than cut services and increase user fees, we encourage you to reconsider raising our currently extremely low property taxes. By keeping our property taxes the lowest in the GTA, it's unfairly burdening middle and low-income residents to make up the budget gap. We also hope that you will think again about all revenue options presented in the City Manager's report, such as a vehicle registration tax- all tools that can help meet the budget gap and not compromise critical programs and services across Toronto.

At Scadding Court, we serve a diverse and growing population every day. People from across the City access our "Flavours of Diversity" cooking program for people with disabilities; youth from nearby social housing use the Welcome Policy for recreation programs; we run the only emergency and occasional child care program in Toronto; we were the first community centre to start a community garden, and a market out of shipping containers for people without access to capital who want to start a business. Our skating rink and swimming pool are also well loved in the community.

We are proud to provide services and programs that make a difference to the lives of people in the City. Scadding Court is concerned with the belief that in order to balance the City's budget, cuts will be made that will deeply affect our communities and our City.

In particular, SCCC is deeply concerned about our current affordable housing crisis and access to recreation. We are disappointed by the underfunding of our public transit system, child care, and our libraries – but I'm sure there are many others here to speak to those items today.

Access to Housing:

We believe this budget does nothing to address the over \$2 billion backlog in repairs at Toronto Community Housing. Repairs to the homes of our friends and neighbours shouldn't be considered optional.

This budget also suggests reversing the funding for recommendations from the Mayor's Task Force. What was the point of the Task Force if recommendations are not implemented?

Cuts could also mean closing transitional housing with shelters already at capacity.

When we are talking about poverty reduction and access to housing as a city, why are talking about cuts?

Access to Recreation:

We use Community Grants to help support our programs. By not increasing the grant budget to cover inflationary costs, it means less funding for the programs we provide.

At the same time as program funding would decrease, user fees for City programs will increase by at least the cost of inflation. In addition, the Welcome Policy subsidy will not increase – even by the cost of inflation. So programs will cost more, and the subsidy amount will stay the same. We believe it is necessary to make sure all residents of our City can participate in recreational programs- not just those who are able to pay fees.

In Conclusion:

Real people are affected by these decisions. We see them every day. We can't pretend the City has a spending problem anymore: Scadding and many others across Toronto believe it is time to use the revenue tools we have and introduce a property tax that brings in adequate revenue to support our existing programs, and fund the approved, but unfunded projects that are needed to help build our City.

Please consider how your decisions impact the entire City. Poverty costs the City up to \$5.5 billion per year. Supporting our most vulnerable is not only the right thing to do, it helps break the cycle of poverty so these residents can contribute more to the tax base.

We are very grateful for the hard work of City staff and our City Councillors, and hope you will make decisions about the budget that will help ensure our City's greatness for years to come.