

TWCA Toronto Women's City Alliance Making Equality Matter.

January 23, 2017

The Chair
Budget Committee
City Hall
100 Queen Street West
Toronto, ON M5H 2N2

Dear Mayor Tory and Councillors,

The Toronto Women's City Alliance is urging you to ensure a gender analysis is done on the 2017 Budget and to cancel the proposed 2.6% cut to areas in the City Budget which will overtly negatively impact the lives of women and girls living in Toronto. The proposed 2.6% budget cuts are "across the board," however the impacts of these cuts will not be experienced by Toronto citizens equally. Cuts to particular areas such as shelter and housing, transit, child care and community recreation programs will disproportionately affect the lives of women and girls, and particularly women and girls who face greater rates of systemic inequality due to their identity as First Peoples, race, income, immigration status, sexual identity, gender, and accessibility needs. By cutting services or making services more expensive, you are sending a clear message that women and girls in the city of Toronto do not matter and their lives and ability to fully participate in this City is not important. These cuts also put the lives of women and girls at risk, as they will no longer be able to access or afford programs that are vital for maintaining their livelihoods and quality of life. The TWCA is urging you to make changes to the upcoming budget that respect all women and girls within the city and ensure their lives are better and not worse off in 2017 and moving forward towards the future. In light of the adopted motion, on July 12, 2016, that the city conduct a gender equity perspective on the budget, we urge you to commit to this motion by removing gender bias from the budget that perpetuates discrimination against women and girls across Toronto.

Women and girls make up more than 50% of the population of Toronto, and yet their specific needs have been left out of the City budget. If the City wants to create a city that is inclusive and be proud of its diversity it must address the inequities that currently exist in the budget that disproportionately negatively impact women and girls within the city. Some examples include the following:

- **Transit:** Increasing public transit costs negatively impact women. More women than men use transit, and women use transit differently than men, often making more trips in a day. Multiple trips add up and make transit unaffordable for women. Diverse women also have different needs for transit design and routes that consider things such as safety and accessibility.
- **Housing:** Reducing shelter and housing staffing and programming costs negatively impact women. More women, especially senior and lone-parent women are on the waitlist for social housing. Women are more likely to experience poverty, especially lone-parents, seniors, women living with a disability, women who are victims of violence, and women belonging to a marginalized group, demonstrating

their increased need for affordable housing. Inaccessibility to affordable housing can keep women and their children in abusive households, or living in poor-quality housing that does not meet their needs.

- **Child care:** Cuts to child care subsidies and increasing child care costs for families negatively impact women. Women continue to bear the primary responsibility for child care, therefore cuts to child care services directly affect women and their ability to care for their children while fulfilling their other responsibilities. Women who are heads of lone-parent households or living in low-income circumstances are more likely to depend on child care, therefore cuts to child care services or increased costs disproportionately affect low-income women. Further, leaving work or school to take care of children negatively affects the ability for women to obtain long term financial security.
- **Community recreation:** Increasing community recreation costs negatively impact women and girls. Women depend on community recreation to connect with people in their community and access vital physical programs. Low-income women report cost as a major barrier preventing them and their children from participating in community recreation programs. This means that low-income women and their children won't benefit from important physical and cultural programs in the city, further alienating and disadvantaging these groups.
- **Jobs:** Cutting jobs at the city negatively impact women. More women are employed in the social service sector. Cutting social services and programs puts women in precarious economic situations and keeps women in poverty.

We appreciate your time in reading our submission and should you be interested, we would be happy to discuss any of the issues outlined above.

Sincerely,

Nicole Beuglet, on behalf of the Toronto Women's City Alliance

The Toronto Women's City Alliance (TWCA)

In 2004, a diverse group of women formed TWCA to end the growing silence of women and girls' voices from Toronto's political agenda, because women and girls experience communities differently from men and boys. We have been striving for the City to apply a gender lens or analysis when developing policies, budgets and practices. A gender lens examines how people of all genders and gender expressions are impacted by policies, decisions and programs. It allows for an intersectional understanding of gender, incorporating and understanding of race, First Nation identity, class, ability, age, etc. For over ten years our actions in the areas of Housing, Transit, Childcare, Recreation, and especially Urban Planning, have shown the validity, relevance and urgency of a gender lens.

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