

**From:** [Quinn Conlon](#)  
**To:** [Budget Committee](#)  
**Cc:** [Ekron Hamilton](#); [Lutfun Nahar](#); [Sahar Cassem](#)  
**Subject:** Deputation to Budget Committee for Creating Health Plus  
**Date:** January 24, 2022 12:01:34 PM

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To the Budget Committee,

Please add my comments to the agenda for the January 24/25, 2022 Budget Committee meeting. I understand that my comments and the personal information in this email will form part of the public record and that my name will be listed as a correspondent on agendas and minutes of City Council or its committees. Also, I understand that agendas and minutes are posted online and my name may be indexed by search engines like Google.

Comments:

Thank you Chair and City Council for making time to listen to your constituents on this vitally important issue.

My name is Quinn Conlon, and I am writing on behalf of the Weston King Neighbourhood Centre to express my adamant support for the Creating Health Plus (CH+) program.

The Weston King Neighbourhood Centre (WKNC) is a community-based non-profit that has provided meals, groceries, and other essential food-related services to the Weston area for over twenty years. As a frontline organization, we have seen firsthand the ways in which the pandemic and the escalating housing crisis have impacted our community's ability to afford safe and healthy food. In 2021 alone, we served a record 43,500 meals and distributed 5,000 bags of groceries to a diverse cross-section of our neighbours, many of whom are people experiencing houselessness, seniors on fixed-income, newcomers and families that are unemployed/under-employed due to COVID-19.

Recent research demonstrates that Weston is not alone in this crisis – between April 2020 and March 2021, Toronto food banks saw the highest number of visits ever recorded at 1.45 million (Who's Hungry Report, 2021). And with steeply increasing inflation, rising rents and ongoing waves of COVID-19 infection, we anticipate that the need will only continue to grow and our ability to meet that demand will continue to be tested.

During this exceptionally challenging time, the CH+ program has been absolutely essential to our ability to offer healthy and consistent meal services. WKNC relies on food donations and has a very limited budget for purchasing food – as such, weekly deliveries of milk, eggs, yogurt, fruits and vegetables has ensured that we're able to fulfil the growing demand and continue offering nutritious and robust meals to our community. If we were to lose or even experience a reduction in CH+ services, it would be highly detrimental to our ability to operate at a level that meets the need.

The CH+ program has time and again proven its value to the residents of Toronto:

- CH+ has provided over 3 million lbs of high-quality, nutritious food for over 10 years to agencies serving the vulnerable as a response to hunger and food insecurity experienced by drop-in users.
- CH+ member agencies together served almost 1,718,652 meals this past year to the city's most vulnerable residents. This number has increased by approximately 218,652 meals.

- CH+ provides a targeted, low-cost health intervention for high-risk populations through improved nutrition. An investment in food is a strategic way to relieve some of the burdens placed on the health care system by those living in poverty. It is a long-term socio-economic investment that will build strong neighbourhoods and healthy resilient communities.
- CH+ built a network of community agencies that are working together to create systemic solutions to food insecurity. The Creating Health Plus partnerships with food providers across the city such as FoodReach, The Daily Bread Food Bank, Food Share Toronto, North York Harvest Food Bank, Second Harvest etc. speaks strongly to the power of collaboration across sectors.
- Trained 50 chefs across the city in health, nutrition and cooking skills, thereby building a growing community of practice.

A social return on investment report found that the program has excellent returns on investment - both social and financial through leveraging economies of scale and building more direct relationships with food producers, wholesalers and large-scale distributors, the report concludes that:

1. For every dollar invested in drop-in meal programs, \$1.94 in value is created
2. For every dollar invested in training alone, \$2.15 in value is created
3. The program Improves physical health and mental well-being of equity-deserving communities through its potential to lower disease risk and increase their capacity to manage it
4. CH+ reduces social isolation through the use of food as a vehicle to bring people together
5. CH+ supports the capacity of chefs working in meal programs to efficiently and innovatively create nutritious meals with a limited food supply

With the City dealing with the pandemic response and high levels of food insecurity, now is the time to act and ensure programs like CH+ are adequately supported. I ask this committee to put forward and support a motion to extend the program's funding for 6 months this year to ensure the program's survival and capacity to provide provisions to agencies who need access to these foods in a consistent and reliable manner. In addition to securing this extension, which would cost \$166,650, the motion should include an additional \$16,000 to address the significant inflation in cost of food, allowing the program to maintain the food levels it currently delivers to agencies. This would bring the motion's total to \$182,650. At the Weston King Neighbourhood Centre, we strongly believe that this is the minimum necessary investment the city must make to ensure the thousands of Torontonians that depend on the CH+ program continue to have access to safe, healthy and consistent meals.

Sincerely,

Quinn Conlon  
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