

Draft City Budget 2011

Develop your own messages to Council

City for All Women Initiative (CAWI)

Women in the CAWI network have joined with other community groups to examine this year's draft budget. Here is what we learned and some sample messages.

Form your own opinion and develop your own messages to Council and the Media.

Your Views Matter!

General message: We are happy to see that funds are being invested to maintain social services and that user fees and bus fares are not rising at the same rate as previous years. We are pleased that Council listened to what women in our network were asking for in the election – invest in community services. But we have some questions and concerns.

Housing, Recreation, Child care and Transit

City Council needs to protect and enhance the programs and services that keep our community healthy, housed, cared for and moving – recreation, housing, child care and affordable transit. Our new City Council must bring forward a balanced budget that sustains the social services that connect our community. This supportive infrastructure connects and strengthens all of us, every day.

Let's Work Together

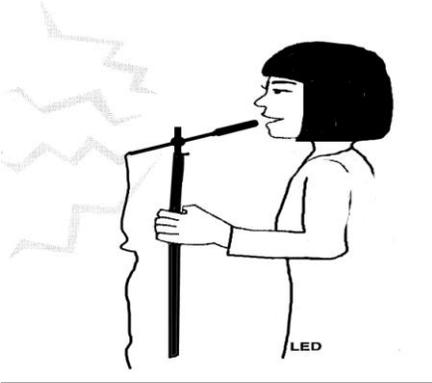
It is widely perceived that the last session of City Council was often divided and unable to move forward. Many new City Councillors pledged during the election campaign to work more collaboratively with their colleagues. They also pledged to take care of their communities, something everyone can support. CAWI joins with the Coalition to Move Ottawa Forward to let you know that we will work with all Councillors to identify budget solutions that work for everyone.



The Issue	Draft budget proposes	Our Concerns	Sample Messages
<p>City Funding</p>  <p>Cities have a key role to play in providing social services, but property taxes and user fees alone cannot provide the funds needed.</p> <p>Cities need more funds from higher levels of government.</p> <p>The Ontario government in the 1990s downloaded onto cities the cost of social services (e.g. ODSP, Ontario Works, Public Health, Social Housing) without providing adequate funds or a new tax base. Now the province is at last taking back the cost of some services each year – “uploading”.</p>	<p>2.45% tax increase</p> <p>With plan to keep it to 2.5% during the 4 years of this Council’s term</p>	 <p>This year, the City can keep it to a 2.45% tax increase and avoid cuts to social services because:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is \$25 million in savings that the City has as a result of the province “uploading” some of the costs of social programs. • Federal stimulus money helped to pay for some new construction. • Ottawa Police kept their budget to a 2.5% increase <p>But 2.5% will not be enough in future years, it is not sustainable.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We are pleased that the City is using the “upload” dollars to invest in social services. This is reinvesting where it belongs. • However, we realize this cannot be maintained if the City keeps to a 2.5% increase over the next three years. • CAWI joins with the Coalition to Move Ottawa Forward to let you know we want to work with City Council to call on the provincial and federal government to provide more funds for cities. 

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<p>Affordable Housing</p> <p>Dedicate at least \$15 million a year for a housing fund to leverage money from other levels of government and private sector so as to build 1000 new homes and fix up existing ones.</p>  <p>There are 10,000 families on the waiting list for social housing.</p> <p>Housing organizations are urging that the \$15 million resources come from the “upload” dollars the City is getting back from the Province.</p>	<p>Allocate \$14 million for housing, including \$10 million investment in Housing and Poverty Reduction initiatives; and \$4 million in capital investment.</p> <p>Capital investment includes new housing, and retrofitting on existing ones.</p> 	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$14 million is a significant investment. • However, the draft budget says that the \$10 million would go to housing <u>and</u> poverty reduction. • While improving housing will help to reduce poverty, there are many other poverty reduction strategies outlined in the City of Ottawa Poverty Reduction Strategy. • We wish to see this full \$10 million be dedicated to housing. • It is good that the poverty reduction is mentioned in the budget, but if this is a reference to the poverty reduction strategy, additional funds would need to be allocated toward implementing the 16 recommendations in the plan. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I am happy that this draft budget shows a commitment to social housing. • This will be a big step forward in addressing the housing shortage in our city. • This is a good investment. It's cheaper to lift people out of poverty through affordable housing than to keep them locked in cycles of homelessness and relying on emergency services such as shelters and urgent care in the health care system. • However, I am concerned that the \$10 million is to be shared between housing and poverty reduction. Housing is one aspect of reducing poverty. • To address the other issues outlined in the Poverty Reduction Strategy additional funds are required. • We ask that you work with community partners in determining the best allocation of these funds.

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<p>Bus Fares</p> <p>Stop fare increases. We need affordable transit.</p>  <p>City bus fares have increased by 7.5% each year over the last 3 years.</p> <p>The City says this increase is necessary in order to cover the cost of public transit. The City has a policy that it must recover 55% of the cost of public transit from the fare box. The other 45% is paid from taxes.</p> <p>City of Ottawa now has the second highest bus fares in the country. In his election campaign, Mayor Watson said that he would want to see fares rise by no more than the rate of inflation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raise fares by 2.5%, rate of inflation. • Seniors free ride increased – previously free Wednesday after 9 am. Would increase to free on Mondays and Fridays after 12 noon. • Reduce routes less used (“milk runs”) to save costs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draft Budget says they plan to have “the same number of customers more efficiently by consolidating routes” and operating with “substantially fewer resources”. • Residents will know which routes are proposed to be cut when they are presented at the Transit Commission on Feb 16th. However, the decision about which routes to cut will not be made until March 23rd - after the Budget is approved. • By cutting routes, buses are less accessible for residents who rely on buses as their only mode of transportation, and less safe for women who may be working late night shifts. Route cuts can result in less ridership which will reduce revenues for transit. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I want Council to not raise bus fares. I know many people who cannot afford to take the bus. But if they must rise by 2.5%, I want to make sure the services are there for us. • There is a lack of transparency in this transit budget. The City Budget assumes that there will be cuts to bus routes, but residents will not know which routes are to be cut until after the City Budget is approved. • The plan is to cut routes with fewer riders, but many of those routes are a life line for women who rely upon those buses to get to work, and to meet the needs of their families. • Walking greater distances to get to a bus can be unsafe and encourages people who have cars to drive. • Instead of cutting underused routes, there should be a focus on a renewed commitment to increasing ridership.

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<p>Childcare</p> <p>Show leadership. Bring the community together to transform the system and protect childcare spaces</p>  <p>Child care is undergoing profound change across Ontario. The introduction of the full day kindergarten is creating confusion and uncertainty for families and for the child care community.</p> <p>Many families do not know if spaces will be there for them or if they will be able to afford them. And many in poorer communities risk losing child care centres altogether.</p>	<p>\$750,000 for non-profit community childcare agencies for capital improvements to support the transition to serving younger children that will result as the full day kindergarten is rolled out.</p> <p>And 2.5% increase in childcare operating costs for childcare partners, Inflationary increased</p>	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This money set aside will help; however, it is far from enough. • There will be centre closures in the coming years as a result of the provincial changes to full day kindergarten. • This means that some childcare programs will close. • Child care community wants the City to work closely with them to call on the provincial government to provide more funding to help keep centres open and respond to community needs. • We need these dollars to be matched by a continued leadership on the part of the city to see that a transformation to a new system will benefit children and families in our city. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Having affordable childcare is critical for me and women I know. • I am pleased that the City has committed \$750,000 for non-profit community childcare, but we need funds from other levels of government to keep centres open and respond to community needs. • I want to see a City Council that is committed to working closely with the community to call on the provincial government to provide more funding to childcare. 

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<p>Accessible Recreation</p> <p>Invest \$1 million of the “upload dollars” in recreation to help keep fees affordable or add to the fund to make more subsidies available.</p>  <p>The City is developing a Recreation Master Plan that has guiding principles about making recreation accessible to low-income residents.</p> <p>Recreation fees continue to rise each year making them unaffordable for many residents.</p> <p>Fee assistance (fee subsidies) is available for low-income families, but funds are limited.</p>	<p>The Draft Budget includes the “freezing of recreation fees”.</p> <p>Cut costs by only providing recreation guide on-line, not providing printed copies</p>	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An analysis of the budget has revealed that there is a 7% increase in the Parks and Recreation Budget in 2011, which would suggest there is enough funds even with the freeze. But we want to be sure of this. • Will freezing the budget results in cuts to staff or programs that will affect services? • Fees for aquatic programs and space rentals are still going up. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Freezing recreation fees would be a very positive step forward in making them more accessible. • But we want to be sure that this will not result in a cut to services or staff that will affect the quality and availability of recreation services. • Not printing the recreation guide is a good environmental practise and will save money. However, we ask that you clarify what steps will be taken to ensure that those who do not have regular access to internet, can still access the resource guide. • This renewed commitment to recreation is very promising and we hope to work with the City to make sure that recreation is accessible for everyone.