



Deputation regarding City of Toronto 2017 Budget

Date: Tuesday, January 10, 2017

To: The City of Toronto Budget Committee

Submitted by: Wendy Komiotis, Executive Director, METRAC

Thank you for the opportunity to make this deputation by METRAC: Action on Violence. My name is Wendy Komiotis, I am METRAC's Executive Director.

METRAC is a 33 years-old, award-winning organization with a mission to prevent gender-based violence. Our mission is to end violence across communities, through education, research, and policy.

We work to build a safer city by conducting community safety audits, running weekly after-school programs for youth with a focus on preventing violence before it starts, and cultivating and mentoring youth to become leaders in their communities. METRAC contributes to building safe neighbourhoods, learning environments and workplaces for all people at risk of gender-based violence. Our Community Safety Audit was recommended by the City of Toronto for implementation across all neighbourhoods and is recognized as a best practice by UN-HABITAT.

METRAC would like to commend the City of Toronto for undertaking a review of the equity and economic impacts of the 2017 Budget, while operating with a gendered lens. Cuts to city services and social programs disproportionality impact women and marginalized groups. For example, the Briefing Note highlights that reversing the 2017 2% inflationary increase to community organizations would have a significant impact on Indigenous Peoples, women, members of racialized groups, LGBTQ2s, persons with disabilities, youth, immigrants, refugees, persons with low-income, undocumented people, and homeless people by restricting access to important community services. We hope the Budget Committee will take the Briefing Note's concerns under consideration.

Childcare

METRAC does not support the proposal to eliminate occupancy grants to 350 child care centres in schools because of its potentially negative impact on families already struggling to pay for the high costs of child care. Even if seen as having low impact, this

cut will require some families to spend an additional \$1.35 per day or \$351 per year, per child.

METRAC encourages the City to keep its promise in funding an additional 75 childcare subsidies and integrate this into the existing budget. We are aware that there are currently 17,000 children on the waiting list for subsidies in need of \$750,000.

The availability of childcare for women facing intimate partner violence helps to increase their options for leaving abusive relationships by providing opportunities to employment, education and training, and language instruction.

Recreation

We know that recreational spaces are essential to the healthy development of children and youth. The slated closure of 16 TDSB schools would directly disenfranchise various groups that includes women, members of the racialized communities, immigrants, refugees, persons with low income, children & youth.

The 2008 “Roots of Violence” report highlights that youth in the city of Toronto’s first indicator of a deprived neighbourhood was a lack of accessible services such as parks and recreation, community health centres, libraries, schools or youth services. With the closure of schools, such as the Vaughn Road Academy, this further adds to the loss of communities’ assets.

On November 8th, hundreds of community members attended and envisioned what a new Community Hub could look like, and what it would represent for the Vaughan-Oakwood community. A Community Hub would be essential to improving the livelihood of a rising population through youth and seniors programming. It would directly reduce violence within the surrounding community as noted within the “Roots of Violence” report, by investing and keeping assets within the community.

Recommendations

- Identify additional revenue streams, such as tax increases, in lieu of cuts to important social programs, which benefit the most marginalized Torontonians, or raised prices for city services, which are used by the most marginalized Torontonians;
- Support Community Hub initiatives such as the Vaughan Road Academy Community Hub Project which repurposes public space for recreational and prevention purposes;
- Keep the 2017 2% inflationary increase to community organizations and protect organizations that help at-risk and vulnerable women such as the Adelaide Resource Centre for Women.

The November 2016 report “The Cost of Poverty in Toronto”, funded by United Way of Toronto & York Region and Open Policy Ontario, estimates the economic cost of

poverty in Toronto to be between \$4.4 - \$5.5 billion in areas relating to crime, health care and lost opportunities for revenue. Investing in prevention, community organizations and social programs as recommended would alleviate this cost for the City of Toronto.