

**The Alliance to End Homelessness Ottawa**  
**L'Alliance pour mettre un terme à l'itinérance d'Ottawa**  
[www.endhomelessnessottawa.ca](http://www.endhomelessnessottawa.ca)

CITY OF OTTAWA COMMUNITY AND PROTECTIVE SERVICES COMMITTEE NOVEMBER 15, 2012  
ALLIANCE TO END HOMELESSNESS SUBMISSION ON DRAFT 2013 OPERATING AND CAPITAL BUDGET

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The Alliance to End Homelessness Ottawa (ATEH) is a non-profit group with 42 member organizations that work with homeless people and those who are at risk of becoming homeless. ATEH's presentation is in the form of a question for the members of this committee. **Will a Councillor on this committee move a motion to recommend to Council that the final 2013 Budget for Ottawa include the \$2.5M to maintain essential services for low-income residents?**

These are the services that the Budget as it stands will eliminate or reduce because of provincial government service reductions and cutbacks. ATEH has reminded all Councillors that 12-15% of the constituents in Ottawa live on a very annual low income. For those working for minimum wage that means \$21,000/yr.; for individuals on OW it is an indefensible \$7,200/yr.; and for individuals receiving ODSP that means \$12,800/yr. A senior's income on Old Age Security with a Guaranteed Income Supplement is only \$14,500 annually. Incomes this low will leave absolutely no room for unexpected expenses even if they are essential.

The ATEH board appreciates that this committee faced constraints in developing its budget, that this first draft does allocate \$15M to cover the cost of the most of the 2012 benefits at risk. As well as the \$2.5M that is still needed, there are also questions about changes that will affect those on low income that are part of the draft budget to achieve the \$15M.

**The ATEH Board agrees with Councillors that the Province of Ontario is responsible for the City's budget dilemma.**

We have informed MPPs and MPs too about our concerns. We began by asking local MPPs to take the lead on a campaign to reinstate these provincial funds. These services are essential – that is how they came to be available in the first place. In the meanwhile, ATEH believes that the City still has room in the 2013 Budget for people living on very low incomes. Our question is guided by a fundamental principle of good government, which is:

**TO DO NO HARM** To act on this principle Council would include in the 2013 Budget a further \$2.5M to protect the most vulnerable in our community from service erosion. This can be done by adding to the budget while still keeping it under a 2.5% increase or by reducing expenditures proportionally across committees' budgets.

**We ask the committee to consider three glaring examples of the services that will be eliminated in this city:**

- (1) Assistance to pay for a funeral service (only help with the cost of the actual burial or cremation will remain);
  - o *Veterans who die in our community will not be the only ones treated shabbily if Councillors decide the city will no longer help people who have very low incomes with the cost of a modest funeral service.*
- (2) Assistance with the over-the-counter cost of respiratory supplies such as a vaporizers; and
- (3) Help with traveling expenses for something like attending a parent's out-of-town funeral.

**Removing a last-resort option to apply for help with unexpected expenses** like these will definitely have an impact of people's ability to stay housed. ATEH suggests a more appropriate response than these changes is to **join forces with the community to let the province and local MPPs know that service reductions and cutbacks unacceptable**. ATEH has had quite a bit of practice in advocacy and would be pleased to partner with Council on ways to get the public engaged.

In the future our city cannot sustain absorbing critical funding for necessary services. We all know the Province must do more for municipalities not less! In the meanwhile, the Ottawa 2013 Budget discussion is open until November 28<sup>th</sup>; there is time to change it. **City Council should do no harm!**

**ATEH's only request of Community and Social Services is that one of the Councillors on this committee move a motion to recommend to the full Ottawa Council that it approve a final 2013 Budget that includes \$2.5M to maintain essential services for low-income residents.**

*Note – By the end of this meeting, no Councillor had stepped forward with such a motion. Councillors did consult staff and approved moving \$250,000 from child care services to reduce the \$2.5 million gap.*

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**OPEN LETTER to the City of Ottawa Council**

November 8, 2012

**The Alliance to End Homelessness (ATEH) in Ottawa is urging all Ottawa Councillors and their Committees to come up with a final 2013 Budget at the Council Meeting on November 28<sup>th</sup> that maintains essential services to low-income residents that will otherwise be eliminated because of provincial government service reductions and cutbacks.**

The ATEH board (Steering Committee) applauds the members of the Community and Protective Services Committee for proposing a CPS Budget that includes \$15M to cover the cost of the majority of 2012 benefits at risk – quite an achievement for just one department – but a further \$2.5M needs to be found through the other City Committees. On November 15<sup>th</sup> ATEH will urge CPS to bring a motion to City Council proposing a final Ottawa Budget that will maintain the existing range of services covered under discretionary benefits either through a city budget increase of 2.2% or by reducing expenditures in other departments.

These discretionary services have been helping people deal with unexpected expenses while maintaining their housing and warding off homelessness, or helping them set up a place of their own as they move back into the community after being homeless.

**Only \$2.5M is needed, a change of one-tenth of one percent in the total Ottawa Budget.**

The Province of Ontario has created serious problems for our municipality but with just a bit more funding the City of Ottawa can hold the line, keep things from getting worse, and allow Ottawa residents struggling on low incomes to maintain their dignity and the opportunity for success.

**As it stands, the Ottawa Budget includes some very difficult changes for individuals and families on low incomes.** One of the main causes of homelessness is unexpected, unplanned expenses such as paying for a funeral service. Under the proposed Budget cuts, **community members with a low income will no longer be able to apply for help with funeral service expenses.** *Imagine explaining to a mother or father who has just lost a child that the City can no longer help cover the cost of a service, only the cost of the actual burial or cremation.* To be sure, families will still hold a service to grieve their loved one but the full cost of a service will have to come out of rent or food money. People on minimum wage, OW, ODSP or even OAS/GIS have no extra money for such expenses. This not only puts a family at risk of becoming homeless, but a burden like this can translate into the need for more affordable housing, add more applicants to the housing registry, and require more funding for emergency shelters and increase the use of hospital ERs.

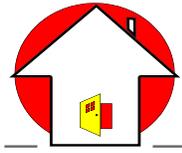
**In addition to funeral services, another area the City of Ottawa will no longer cover as of January 1<sup>st</sup> is respiratory supplies. There will also be reduced funds available for financial assistance with vision and dental care or for furniture items people may need to move out of a homeless shelter into a place of their own.** *(The full list of cuts and service reductions is below.)*

Increasing the total Budget increase for the City Of Ottawa by one-tenth of one percent up to 2.2% would cover these service cuts and reductions. Councillors on the CPS Committee have done a valiant job in finding most of what the province no longer provides. **Now it is up to all other Councillors and their Committees to act and find the remaining 2.5M.**

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**Maintaining these services reflects both a commitment to dignity for low income constituents and to protecting tax payers from other costly housing and health expenditures.**

Keep in mind that the Province of Ontario expanded eligibility for these discretionary funds. Unfortunately this is a good idea that comes with an inadequate funding envelope. Even with the \$2.5 M covered by Ottawa the province is expecting municipalities to serve more people than ever with 50% less funding and that is an impossible task.

Be assured that ATEH is asking Ottawa's Members of Provincial Parliament to restore full amount of the provincial funds. It is also asking the people of Ottawa to urge Councillors to pass a Budget that will maintain the existing range of services into 2013 even if there is less funding from the province.

Lynne Browne

*Executive Director*

*Alliance to End Homelessness Ottawa*

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**In 2013 proposed City Of Ottawa Budget, community members with a low income will no longer be able to apply for help with:**

- Funeral services (*only funds for cremations and burials will continue*)
- Respiratory supplies, air conditioners, vaporizers
- Funds for food or clothing above the maximum basic allowance amounts set by the Province
- Non-health related travel benefits (*i.e., a parent's funeral in another community*)
- Enhanced items formerly funded through the Provincial Assistive Devices Program (ADP)\* including prosthetics, mobility aids and hearing aids will not be covered under discretionary benefits.

**In 2013 the proposed Budget will include less money to help those applying for help with:**

- Dental services, dentures **(13% cut)**
- Eyeglasses for adults **(23% cut)**
- Cultural interpretation **(22% cut)**
- Furniture to help set up after being homeless **(3% cut)**

**People living in poverty in City of Ottawa:**

The Ottawa Social Planning Council, using data from Statistics Canada "Low Income Cut-Off" (LICO), reports that approximately **15% of the population (130,000 individuals)** lived in poverty in City of Ottawa (2005). By 2011, Ottawa's total population was 883,391.