

# Building Better Budgets **#TOBUDGET 2013** **#HOUSING**

## **BIG CUTS PLANNED FOR TORONTO HOUSING FUNDING**

The City of Toronto's Shelter, Support and Housing is set to take a massive \$128 million cut in housing and homelessness investments in the draft 2013 budget — down from \$793 million in 2012 to \$665 million in the coming year. The 2012 budget had, in turn, a \$137 million cut from its approved budget of \$993 million in 2011. That adds up to a 16% cut in this year — and a 33 percent cut over two years (a loss of \$328 million).

In the planned 2013 municipal budget, a big chunk of the housing cuts — \$72 million — come from federal and provincial cuts to housing subsidies that are mostly distributed to affordable housing providers including Toronto Community Housing, co-op and non-profit housing providers. (Not included in this figure: about \$21 million in provincial housing and homelessness funding to Toronto to be cut on January 1, 2013. Most of that spending is in another part of Toronto's municipal budget - Toronto Employment and Social Services. The city is proposing to stop-gap those cuts over the next year as it negotiates with the province to restore funding.)

The City of Toronto will pile on its own cuts on top of federal and provincial cuts — the draft 2013 budget calls for \$56 million in city housing cuts.

Most of the huge cuts are planned for social and affordable housing. Last year's municipal budget called for \$569 million in investments in social housing — which subsidizes existing housing for hundreds of thousands of the poorest Torontonians. This year, spending is to be cut to \$472 million.

The city's affordable housing budget — which funds desperately needed new homes — will be cut in half from \$49 million last year to \$24 million this year.

Toronto's spending on homeless shelters and supports and services to help people who are homeless move to affordable housing have been flat-lined in the 2013 budget at \$165 million.

## **THE IMPACT ON TORONTO: POOR HEALTH, PREMATURE DEATH, ECONOMIC LOSSES**

Hacking one-third of Toronto's spending on housing and homelessness programs over two years will have a devastating impact on affordable housing in the city, on the health and lives of hundreds of thousands of the city's poorest and most vulnerable residents, and ultimately on the population health of the entire city.

Toronto's affordable housing wait list stood at an all-time record of 87,301 households in October of 2012. That's 161,222 women, men and children desperate for a decent place to call home. The city's wait list has set a new record every month — month after month — since the recession of 2008. And many desperate Torontonians don't even bother to sign onto the list because the wait is a decade or more in the most optimistic case.

Another sign of the deep impact of Toronto's affordable housing crisis: More than 946,000 visits to food banks, according to the latest data from Daily Bread Food Bank. People are hungry and rely on food charity due to low incomes and the high cost of housing.

Study after study confirms that people who are precariously housed, and those who are forced into the streets, suffer a heavy burden of illness and premature death.

Toronto's affordable housing crisis is bad for the health of the hundreds of thousands who are at the centre of the storm; the crisis is bad for the population health of the entire city; it's bad for the social and economic health of Toronto. A lack of affordable housing is a drag on our economy.

On the plus side, investing in affordable housing is good for the health of individuals and the entire community, and provides a boost to the economy through jobs and other stimulus.

The big cuts to existing social housing in Toronto's draft 2013 budget means less money to help low-income households pay their housing costs, and less money to properly maintain the buildings. The cost of these massive housing cuts: Longer line-ups at food banks, a rise in economic evictions as poor households cannot pay the rent and unhealthy conditions in affordable housing as necessary building repairs are unfunded.

The big cuts in funding for new affordable homes in Toronto's draft 2013 budget means fewer new homes will be funded. The cost of these cuts: Longer wait lists for affordable housing, and longer waits for those already on the wait lists.

Freezing homelessness spending even as inflation erodes spending power, and the pressure on homeless services grows because of the housing cuts, will leave the city's homeless services struggling to cope with a growing tide with extremely tight resources.

## SOME SPECIFIC IMPACTS OF PLANNED CUTS IN 2013 MUNICIPAL BUDGET

- Cuts in housing follow-ups and pre-employment support for people transitioning from homelessness to housing.
- Cuts in meals, snacks and food allowances for children and adults in the city's homeless shelter system.
- Elimination of personal needs allowances for people in homeless shelters.
- 52 fewer homeless shelter beds at municipal shelters.
- 120 more homeless shelter beds at community shelters.
- Fewer calls at central homeless intake registry.
- Fewer complaints will be managed at central level.
- Fewer quality training sessions for homeless shelter workers.
- Fewer private rent supplements for low-income renter households.
- Fewer housing allowances for low-income renter households with both private and non-profit landlords.

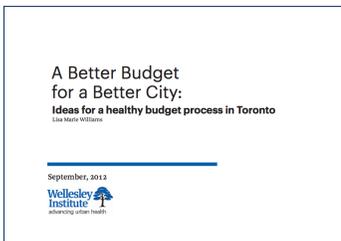
More details will follow as the Wellesley Institute continues to track the City of Toronto's 2013 municipal budget process.

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## MORE FROM THE WELLESLEY INSTITUTE ON BUILDING BETTER, HEALTHIER BUDGETS.



### A BETTER BUDGET FOR A BETTER CITY

The whole city has cause to reflect after last year's budget process. From the Core Service Review to the all-night-meetings and subsequent cuts and ill-thought out fees for sports fields, last year's city budget process fell short of what's needed for better city building.

We've released a new report that looks to Calgary, New York, Chicago and Philadelphia for models of better budget processes we think can work in a city like Toronto, in turn creating a better, more engaged and livable city for us all.

**EXERCISING GOOD POLICY: INCREASING ACCESS TO RECREATION IN TORONTO'S 2013 BUDGET**  
Access to recreation is essential for good health for all Torontonians. Barriers to access to recreation prevent many of us from not only enjoying the services themselves, but the many health benefits that come with them. This report offers three policy options that could be included in the 2013 budget to preserve and support recreation in Toronto.



### BUILDING COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP FOR A HEALTHIER TORONTO

Neighbourhoods that have options for active transportation like walking and cycling, opportunities for physical activity like recreation centres, green spaces to be active and socialize in, and places to access healthy and nutritious food, tend to have greater opportunities for good health. But not every neighbourhood in Toronto incorporates these health-promoting features. This report looks to community leadership in the built environment for improved population health.

**The Wellesley Institute is a Toronto-based non-profit and non-partisan research and policy institute. Our focus is on developing research and community-based policy solutions to the problems of urban health and health disparities.**

