

Initial observations: Toronto's 2010 operating budget cuts or flat-lines funding for housing, homelessness, social, health programs while police budget rises

February 19, 2010

Affordable housing need is growing in Toronto. The City of Toronto's affordable housing waiting list was at 71,498 households at the end of 2009 – an all-time record and an increase of 7% over 2008. Toronto was able to house 4,256 households last year, the lowest annual number ever. The average wait for an affordable home in Toronto is 16.8 years – as of 2009.

The *City of Toronto has consistently fallen far short of its official affordable housing goals* over the past decade. In 1999, City Council adopted the targets of 2,000 new affordable homes and 1,000 new supportive homes annually as recommended by the Mayor's Homelessness Action Task Force. In 2005, City Council scaled back its target to 1,000 new homes annually. In 2009, City Council adopted a ten-year housing plan that called for 1,000 new affordable homes and 1,070 new supportive homes annually. In December of 2009, staff reported that Toronto has completed 3,534 new affordable and supportive homes since 1999. That's about 11% of the target set in 1999. The annual average (321 new homes each year) is less than one-third of the target set by Toronto in 2005 and less than one-sixth of the target set by Toronto in 2009.

Shelter, Support and Housing Administration (affordable housing and homelessness programs):

- Overall, the operating budget is to be cut by \$70.7 million in 2010, down to \$854 million from the 2009 approved budget of \$925 million. That's a cut of 7.6%.
- The 2010 budget calls for a slight increase to 1.454 million bed-nights of emergency shelter (3,985 beds per night, 365 days a year), up 2.9% over 2009. The city reports that more families are crowding into the city's homeless shelters.
- Toronto Community Housing Company estimates that, with recent municipal, provincial and federal contributions, its unfunded state of good repair backlog is \$200 million.
- A total of 782 affordable homes are to be funded in 2010, but only 206 are new projects. The other 576 were approved for funding in 2009, then delayed.

Affordable Housing Office (oversees the development of new and renovated homes, and partners with senior levels of government and community / private partners):

- Overall, the budget will be flat-lined at \$3.2 million in 2010.
- Toronto's Capital Revolving Fund will drop below \$2 million in 2010. Staff are to bring forward a report for the 2011 budget cycle on proposals to add more dollars to the fund.
- While the Affordable Housing Office remains committed to a target of 1,000 new affordable homes, only 782 will be funded in 2010 (22% short of the target) – and just 206 are new.

Municipal licensing and standards (including standards enforcement for residential buildings):

- Overall, the budget will be flat-lined at \$50.2 million.
- City inspectors found almost 10,000 building standards in 187 buildings during a 2009 blitz, but ongoing enforcement is listed as a priority for MLS in 2010 (increasing the percentage of dogs and cats with licenses is a priority).

Community Partnership and Investment Program (supports and funds community-based initiatives throughout the city):

- Overall, the budget will be flat-lined at \$46 million.
- Hunger is a major issue for Torontonians, with 799,315 Toronto residents using a food bank in 2009 – up 7% from the previous year. Fully 34% of those were children. The city proposes to spend \$3.8 million on its student nutrition program in 2010, up 17% from 2009.

Social Development, Finance and Administration (supports and funds partnerships and community engagement initiatives):

- Overall, the budget will be reduced slightly to \$24.7 million.
- Toronto has just adopted a new community partnerships strategy. Both the community development and Toronto Office of Partnerships budgets have been increased slightly.

Toronto Public Health (improve population health and reduce health inequalities):

- Overall, the 2010 budget has been cut by \$3.3 million to \$219.5 million.
- One year after TPH's "Unequal City" documented massive health inequalities, the 2010 budget calls for cuts to staffing plus dental / oral health and healthy environments initiatives.

City Planning (planning and zoning rules for Toronto):

- Overall, the budget will be cut by 3.9% to \$36 million.
- City Planning to deliver on a number of critical city-building initiatives (Transit City, new zoning bylaw, infrastructure projects), but is planning to reduce its staff in 2010.

Toronto Police Services (policing):

- Overall, the budget is \$954 million, which makes it the largest operating expense within the Toronto municipal budget.
- Toronto Police report a 10% reduction in the seven major crime indicators in 2009 over 2008, yet the police budget calls for an increase of 3.8% - or \$35 million.

The Wellesley Institute advances urban health through rigorous research, pragmatic policy solutions, social innovation, and community action.

Michael Shapcott, Director, Affordable Housing and Social Innovation,
The Wellesley Institute, 45 Charles Street East, Suite 101, Toronto, ON, Canada, M4Y 1S2
 T – 416-972-1010, x231 // F – 416-921-7228
 michael@wellesleyinstitute // www.wellesleyinstitute.com