

# New research delivers stark warning:

## Tiny savings from cutting Toronto community support comes with big potential cost

OCTOBER, 2011

Resilient networks of support build a sense of connectedness and trust – and are essential for individual health, and the health of communities. A new research report from the Wellesley Institute draws the links between a strong and vibrant community sector, robust social networks and good health. *Reducing disparities and improving population health: The role of a vibrant community sector* also offers a strong warning to Toronto City Council as it considers proposals for sharp cuts to municipal support for community organizations.

**DURING TORONTO'S CORE SERVICES REVIEW, CUTS TO COMMUNITY INITIATIVES HAVE BEEN PROPOSED:**

- Community Capacity Building Program (\$16.21m)
- Community and Neighbourhood Development Community funding (\$1.17m)
- Community and Neighbourhood Development Community Engagement (\$0.58m)
- Community and Neighbourhood Development Youth Development (\$2.38m)
- Community and Neighbourhood Development Neighbourhood Revitalization (\$0.73m)
- Community Partnership and Investment Program (\$47.4)
- Housing Policy and Partnerships (\$1.1m)
- Toronto Office of Partnerships (\$0.7m)
- AIDS Prevention and Community Investment (\$1.68m)
- Drug Prevention Community Investment (\$0.84m)

The list of community supports is under constant review and change. Two observations about community funding and the municipal budget:

First, overall city spending on strengthening the community sector is tiny compared to Toronto's \$9 billion-plus operating budget. Some of the money distributed by the city comes from senior levels of government, so the financial savings to taxpayers from cutting any or all of the community sector spending is practically non-existent.

Second, the impact of the loss of the funding would be widespread. [Commitment2Community](#), a Toronto coalition of community-based groups, has a list of initiatives supported in part by city funding, and this includes:

- community festivals and events
- community/neighbourhood mediation
- community safety initiatives
- emergency planning and preparedness
- children's literacy, arts and recreation programs
- youth leadership development and entrepreneurial supports, drop-ins, summer jobs
- community access to computers and office machines
- free income tax clinics
- free or low-cost access to meeting and program spaces
- seniors recreation (dance, singing, fitness, walking); workshops, support groups, drop-ins, self-help groups; health and wellness (Tai chi classes, social support, group field trips, congregate dining)
- youth recreation (basketball, dance, boxing, fitness, weight training, bicycling, camping)
- summer camp, march and winter break programs for children and youth
- community arts (dance, music, photography, film, community theatre)
- HIV/AIDS education & street outreach
- safe sex education and condom distribution
- community kitchens and gardens
- homeless drop-ins, voice-mail for the phoneless, housing placement and support
- drug awareness workshops

- educational materials on HIV/AIDS and drugs
- meals, crisis intervention and access to health care and
- mental health services for homeless people
- adult drop-ins
- volunteer recruitment and support
- safe walk home programs
- funding for community support and crisis intervention workers,
- eviction prevention
- graffiti transformation and community mural programs
- admin supports for service delivery hubs (including new inner suburb hubs and community operated community centres)

Updates on Toronto's Core Services Review process and the development of the municipal budget can be found at

[WWW.WELLESLEYINSTITUTE.COM](http://WWW.WELLESLEYINSTITUTE.COM)

The Wellesley Institute's research review shows that strong and resilient community networks have a positive impact on individual and population health by attending to local needs, supplying important services, engaging community members, mobilizing public policy advocacy, and helping to ameliorate the harsh effects of inequalities. But key conditions are required for a dynamic and responsive community sector including adequate resources (including funding).

The bottom line: Cutting a tiny amount of municipal support for the community sector will save Toronto taxpayers almost nothing while the impact of those cuts is potentially huge.

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