

2012 City Budget: Proposed Service Cuts and User Fee Increases
Last Updated: December 16, 2011

- Elimination of the [Hardship Fund](#) by June 2012 - supported over 1,500 seniors in 2011, particularly senior women, and people with disabilities with serious health problems
- [Cuts to libraries](#) including over 18,000 hours at 56 branches and a 1.89 million cut to the purchase of library materials
- Elimination of [priority recreation centres](#) - no more free registered programs for children and youth in priority centres
- [More cuts to recreation](#): closure of 10 arenas in off-peak hours, and increases in recreation user fees, membership and drop-in fees and facility permit costs that range from 3% to 18%
- [Closure](#) of 5 wading pools, 2 outdoor pools, elimination of programming at 7 school board pools and 12 shared use schools
- Closure of three homeless [shelters](#) - Birchmount, Downsview Dells and Bellwoods
- 9.8% cut to [community grants](#) for social services, public health and arts programs delivered by nonprofit community organizations
- Closure of [visitor cafeterias](#) in 10 long term care homes
- Cuts to [58 student nutrition programs](#)
- Elimination of over [2,300 good City jobs](#)
- [Deferral of hiring](#) of 236 police, 68 firefighters and 36 paramedics
- 10 cent [TTC fare increase](#)
- Cuts to [56 bus routes and 6 streetcar lines](#) plus cutbacks in the TTC capital plan for bus purchases that will erode service to pre-2004 levels for at least the next 5 years
- No more [Wheel Trans service](#) for dialysis patients
- Cuts to [streetcar and subway replacement purchases](#)
- Cuts to services that maintain a [healthy tree canopy](#)
- Cuts to [sustainable energy and climate change](#) policy development and implementation

Elimination of the Hardship Fund

From the Toronto Employment and Social Services [analyst notes](#): “The Hardship Fund was established by the City in 1999 to provide financial assistance to cover the costs of specific benefits including prescription drugs, medically based items (i.e. prosthetics), dental and denture needs, eyeglasses, and funerals for low-income individuals who are ineligible for OW or ODSP.”

“The 2011 approved operating budget includes \$1.2 million gross and \$1.0 million net for the Hardship Fund, and three positions to manage over 1500 cases. The 2012 Recommended Operating Budget includes funding to continue the Hardship Fund until June 2012, resulting in a reduction of \$0.588 million gross and \$0.517 million net (1.5 permanent positions) in 2012. The General Manager, Employment & Social Services will pursue discussions on funding the Hardship Fund with the Provincial Government and report back as appropriate.”

The budget includes no provision to continue the Hardship Fund past June 2012 if the Province does not accept responsibility for the Hardship Fund and have it up and running by June. There has been no approach to the Province and no indication from the Province that it will upload this program. In general, provincial uploading has taken years to negotiate.

Read the Toronto Star [report](#) on the Hardship Fund

Watch the [video](#)

Read the Toronto Star [editorial](#)

Sign the [petition](#) to stop the elimination of the Hardship Fund

Cuts to Library Hours and Materials

The Toronto Public Library board, like all of the City’s divisions, agencies, boards and commissions, was asked to make a 10% cut to the public library budget. The board has recommended at 5.9% cut, but refused to make the full 10% cut. The 10% reduction would result in cuts to over 18,000 operating hours at 56 library branches and a \$1.890 million reduction in the library item purchases. At its December 12 meeting, the board refused to make the additional cuts as recommended by the board chair Councillor Ainslie. Councillors Davis, Doucette, Palacio and Robinson voted against the cuts to operating hours and the collections budget. Budget Chief Del Grande has responded by insisting that a full 10% will be cut. This will be a decision for City Council, as are all budget decisions, at its January 17-19 meeting.

Read the [analyst notes](#) for the Toronto Public Library operating budget

Get the latest on the threats to our public libraries and how to take action at [Our Public Library](#)

Read the results of the latest [Toronto Public Library board meeting](#)

Recreation: Cuts, Closures and Increases in User Fees

The City has 21 recreation centres classified as priority centres. At the time of amalgamation, City Council created the priority centre designation for centres located in low income and underserved neighbourhoods. All programs at these centres were offered free of charge to all recreation users. The original goal was to slowly expand the number of priority centres in an effort to work toward universal access for all. During its current term, City Council has been dismantling the priority centre designation by first eliminating free registered programs for adults, and now proposes to do the same for children and youth.

Currently, 20 of these centres provide free registered recreation programs to all children and youth. The budget includes a proposal to end free access to these programs with the introduction of new user fees. Low income families could try to access a subsidy to cover the cost through the City's Welcome Policy. Although the budget calls for an increase of 1.46 million to the Welcome Policy, it is unlikely to meet the need from the increased demand for Welcome Policy created by eliminating free registered programs for children and youth in these centres. At present, the Welcome Policy funds run out each season. In the past two seasons, it has taken one day and two days for the funds to run out from the start of registration. The City does not monitor the number of residents turned away because of lack of funding.

City staff originally estimated that 75% of children and youth at priority centres would continue to access registered programs and would pay full fees. They estimated that 15% of children and youth from these centres would require Welcome Policy funding and 10% would stop using the programs as a result of the introduction of funds. Since those calculations were made, the City has calculated the drop off rate for adults in priority centres. A total of 61% of adults using registered programs at priority centres stopped enrolling in the programs after fees were introduced – a far cry from the estimated 10% for children and youth. Staff now admit that they anticipate a lower level of fee paying registrants and more children and youth no longer registering for these programs with the introduction of fees. They have not provided any revised statistics.

The Budget Committee has passed a motion to convert the Welcome Policy from a program-based to a dollar-based subsidy with a cap of \$455 for children and youth and \$212 adults. The subsidy amount is based on the amount that individuals on the Welcome Policy are currently using. The caps are set at the 70th percentile. This means that 30% of current Welcome Policy users would have a lower level of access to recreation programs than they have now. Staff estimate that 7,500 more users will be accommodated on the Welcome Policy as a result. City Council will consider the recommendation of the Budget Committee at its January budget meeting.

According to the City briefing notes: "In 2011, Welcome Policy subsidy of \$8.69 million is forecasted to accommodate 26,000 participants. In 2012, the Welcome Policy subsidy increased by \$1.46 million [if the budget passes as is] to a total of \$10.15 million and is expected to accommodate 32,000 participants under the current course-based entitlement." Staff say if the program is changed from a program-based subsidy to a dollar-based subsidy, they could accommodate 39,500 people.

The budget also includes a 13% increase to introductory instructional recreation programs including an inflationary increase, 8-18% increase for youth ice permits including an inflationary increase, and a 3% inflationary increase to other permit fees, recreation programs, membership and drop-in fees. As well, the budget includes the closure of 5 wading pools and 2 outdoor pools, elimination of programming at 7 TDSB pools and 12 shared use TDSB schools, and the shutdown of 10 arenas during off-peak hours.

Read the [analyst notes](#) for the Parks, Forestry and Recreation operating budget

Find out which recreation facilities and programs are slated for closure or cuts [here](#)

Join with [Community Recreation for All](#) to ensure recreational access to all

Shelters: Closures and Cuts

The Budget includes a 2.4% cut to available shelter beds as well as cuts to shelter staff and funding for agencies providing drop-in services. It has also assigned three shelters for closure. Birchmount Shelter serves 60 chronically homeless senior men. Bellwoods House is a transitional home for 8 women over 50 including women fleeing domestic violence. Downsview Dells supports 27 homeless men with mental health and addiction issues. The City has said that it will relocate shelter residents to comparable facilities. However, these facilities are specialized to suit the specific needs of their residents and it is so far unclear how these needs will continue to be met elsewhere. This move would eliminate 95 spaces for homeless men and women in need of specialized support. Residents at public depositions expressed their fears of returning to homelessness or to shelters where they do not feel safe and will not meet their needs.

Read the [analyst notes](#) for Shelter, Support and Housing operating budget

Read the [Toronto Life editorial](#) about Bellwoods Shelter

Read [InsideToronto.com report](#) on Birchmount Residence

Cuts to Community Grants for Services Delivered by Nonprofit Community Organizations

Community Partnership and Investment Program grants face a 9.8% cut.

These grants provide mostly seed money to leverage provincial, federal and private donations to fund programs focusing on addressing equity and access in the City of Toronto. Among programs likely to be negatively impacted include those promoting community safety, child, youth, adult, and senior recreation, youth employment, AIDS prevention, Drug prevention, community arts and festivals and services for homeless people. It is not yet clear if cuts will be targeted or across the board.

Find out more about the Commitment 2 Community campaign that is working to safeguard CPIP-funded community programs [here](#)

Read [analyst notes](#) on Community Partnership and Investment Program operating budget

Read the [briefing note](#) on CPIP

Closure of Visitor Cafeterias in Long Term Care Homes

Ten cafeterias in long term care homes where staff, residents and families can purchase meals are scheduled for closure, resulting in 6.7 filled positions being cut. A pre-purchase voucher system is due to take effect in place of cafeterias where individuals can purchase food at residence dining facilities. It is unclear whether staff, visitors and residents will continue to have access to the de-institutionalized spaces the cafeterias provide.

Read [analyst notes](#) on Long Term Care Homes Services operating budget

Read the [briefing note](#) on the closure of the visitor cafeterias

Cuts to Student Nutrition Programs

Grants to 58 student nutrition programs affecting over 14,000 children are slated to be cut. Councillor Ford has reported to media that these programs will not be cut. However the Budget Committee has yet to pass a motion to recommend withdrawing this proposed cut.

Read the [Toronto Star article](#) on nutrition cuts and to see a list of all schools affected

Read the [Toronto Sun article](#) on Councillor Doug Ford's comments regarding saving the student nutrition program

Read the [analyst briefing note](#) on the Community Partnership & Investment Program operating budget

Elimination of Over 2,300 Good City Jobs

The proposed budget includes the elimination of over 2,300 City positions, vital for the delivery of public services to our communities.

Get more details about proposed job cuts [here](#)

Get more details about City "gapping" levels, where positions have been [left vacant](#)

Deferral of Hiring of Police, Firefighters and Paramedics

The budget includes recommendations to defer hiring of 236 police officers, 68 firefighters and 36 paramedics. Debates have focused on projected lower response times related to fire and EMS, as well as, the potential that reduced response times for fire services could result in increased insurance costs for the City, business and residents.

Read [analyst notes](#) on the Toronto Fire Services operating budget

Read [analyst notes](#) on the Emergency Medical Services operating budget

Read [analyst notes](#) on the Toronto Police Services & Board operating budget

Read [briefing notes](#) on EMS response time issues arising from proposed cuts

TTC Service Cuts and Fare Increases

The City has recommended service cuts to 56 bus routes and 6 streetcar lines in all parts of the city, resulting in longer wait times and increased overcrowding to what the TTC has referred to as 'crush load capacity' on buses and streetcars. These cuts along with deferral of new bus purchases will bring Toronto back to pre-2004 service levels. This is the first time in well over decade that the City has recommended a fare increase and service cuts while ridership is on the rise. The last time, the City took such action ridership dropped dramatically. However TTC general manager Gary Webster believes the same dramatic drop is unlikely.

TTC chair Karen Stintz has stated that she would like to use 5 million in surplus to delay the TTC route cuts and spare the busiest routes on Finch, Don Mills and Dufferin. However, no votes on this move have taken place at this time.

Another proposal is a 10 cent fare increase for the next five years, giving residents a further disincentive to leave their cars at home and take the TTC, resulting in still further congestion and increased pollution.

While the stated purpose of Wheel Trans service is to provide "service for persons with greatest need for accessible transportation", it is nonetheless cutting service for dialysis patients. The TTC recognizes that dialysis patient need is increasing and will continue to grow as baby boomers grow older. Its proposed solution before Council is to "Review eligibility criteria for Wheel Trans participants to make it stricter, thereby lowering total demand." If the proposal passes, the 800 ambulatory dialysis customers currently using this service will find themselves no longer eligible to receive support getting to and from treatment.

See the [list](#) of affected bus routes

Read [analyst notes](#) for the Toronto Transit Commission operating budget

Read [analyst notes](#) for the Toronto Transit Commission capital budget

Read about the operating impact of articulated buses [here](#)

Read about current TTC loading standard changes [here](#)

Join with [Toronto Environmental Alliance](#) to oppose TTC cuts and fare increases

Cuts to Services that Maintain a Healthy Tree Canopy and to Sustainable Energy and Climate Change Policy Development and Implementation

Read [analyst notes](#) on Parks, Forestry and Recreation Operating Budget

Read [analyst notes](#) on Policy Planning, Finance and Administration and Toronto Environmental Office and Waterfront operating budget

Read the Update on Status of Climate Change Action Plan, Adaptation Strategy and Sustainable Energy Strategy Recommendations [here](#)

Read the Toronto Environmental Alliance's analysis on the proposed budget's impact on the environment [here](#)