



2012 City Budget: Year-End Update

The City of Toronto's Budget Committee concluded its final meeting of the year on December 13. The 2012 City budget process starts up again on January 9 at the committee's final wrap-up session. Here's where things are at, what happens next and how you can get involved to stop the harmful and unnecessary cuts that are currently being proposed.

First, it's important to know that no final decisions have been made about the 2012 City budget. It is the responsibility of all City Councillors and the Mayor to make those decisions at City Council's January 17-19 meeting. This means we have time to change this budget.

Proposed Service Cuts and User Fee Increases

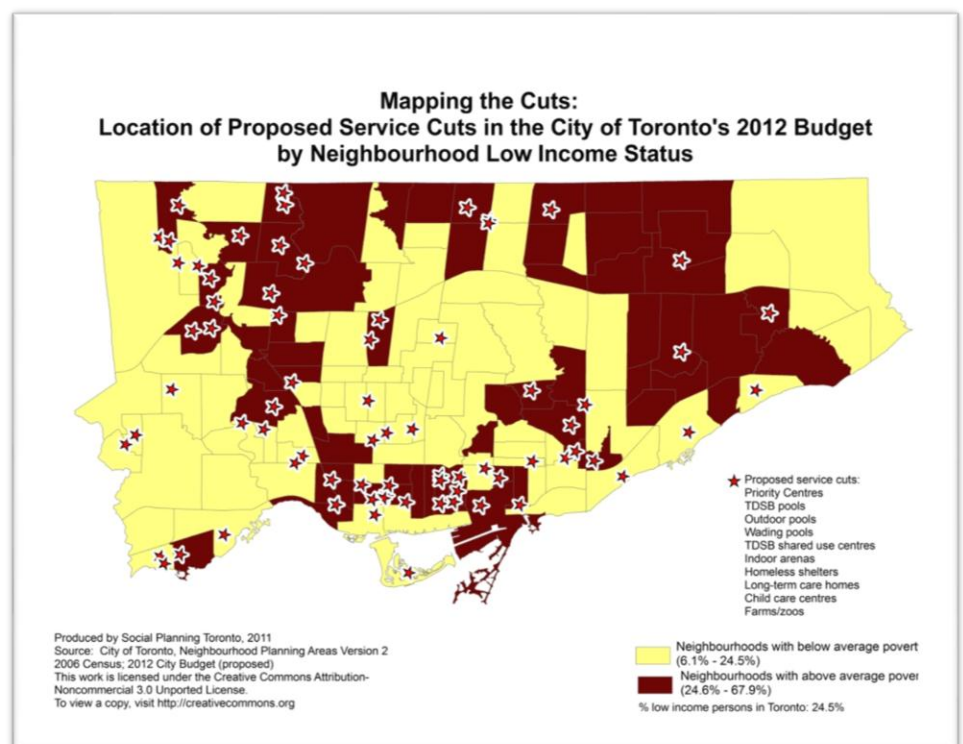
- Elimination of the Hardship Fund by June 2012 - supports low income seniors, particularly senior women, and people with disabilities that have serious health problems
- Cuts to library hours, purchase of library materials – the library board has agreed to a 5.9% cut but rejected plans to eliminate over 18,000 library hours affecting 56 branches; the Budget Chief says a 5.9% cut isn't enough, they must make the full 10% cut
- Cuts to recreation including elimination of free registered programs for children and youth at priority centres, elimination of programs at several TDSB shared-use schools and school pools, closure of some wading pools and outdoor pools, cuts to arena hours, increase user fees for programs and facility permits; the budget includes additional funding for the Welcome Policy, a subsidy fund for low income individuals to access recreation, but the amount is entirely inadequate to meet community need - several Councillors are working to try to preserve recreation programs in shared-use TDSB schools, however these cuts are still under consideration at this time
- 9.8% cut to community services provided by nonprofit community organizations through the Community Partnership and Investment Program; these cuts would hurt communities accessing social services, arts and public health programs
- Cuts to student nutrition that would result in the loss of 58 student nutrition programs – Councillor Ford has told the media these programs will be spared but they are still on the chopping block at this time
- Closure of three homeless shelters (Birchmount, Downsview Dells and Bellwoods) that support nearly 100 senior women and senior men with mental health issues and women fleeing domestic violence

- Cuts to the Affordable Housing Office that facilitates the development of new affordable housing in Toronto, to shelter bed nights and to the Shelter, Support and Housing division budget that supports homeless and at-risk residents
- Closure of visitor cafeterias in long term care homes
- Elimination of over 2,300 good City jobs accompanied by the loss of vital services those workers provide to the community
- Deferral of hiring of police, firefighters and paramedics
- Cuts to 56 bus routes and 6 streetcar lines as of January 8; these service cuts would bring us down to pre-2004 service levels with more overcrowding and longer waits – TTC chair Karen Stintz has stated that she would like to use 5 million in projected surplus to delay the route cuts until February and spare the busiest routes on Finch, Don Mills and Dufferin from cuts
- 10 cent fare increase – that’s less service for more money
- End of 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

Proposed Cuts Hit Poor Neighbourhoods

The proposed cuts are disproportionately located in low income neighbourhoods. Of the 75 location-specific cuts, 42 are located in low income neighbourhoods or 56%. Forty-five percent of Toronto neighbourhoods have poverty rates above 24.5% – Toronto’s poverty rate.

These location-specific cuts tell only part of the story. For example, TTC bus routes while location-based are not mapped and would have a substantial impact on already inadequate service in the inner suburbs and for low income residents across the city. Cuts to community grants would have city-wide and neighbourhood- and community-specific impacts that are not yet clear as the specific programs targeted for cuts have not yet been identified.



What Happens Next?

The Budget Committee meets on January 9 to vote on its recommendations on the 2012 budget. Then the Mayor's Executive Committee meets on January 12 to consider and vote on the recommendations from the Budget Committee. Finally, City Council meets on January 17-19 to make the final decisions on the 2012 City budget.

These meetings are open to the public. Anyone can attend. However there are no opportunities for public input at these meetings.

- Budget Committee: January 9 at City Hall, 100 Queen Street West, Committee Room 1 at 9:30 a.m.
- Executive Committee: January 12 at City Hall, Committee Room 1 at 9:30 a.m.
- City Council: January 17-19 at City Hall, Council Chambers at 9:30 a.m.

We Can Save Our Vital City Services!

With \$88 million in proposed service cuts, a TTC fare hike, and new and higher recreation fees, you might think there isn't a single dollar left on the table to balance the budget. Not so. The City is recommending that, rather than use the City's 2011 surplus to save cherished City services, the surplus be tucked away for future capital projects and into a the Tax Stabilization Reserve fund – a rainy day emergency fund. But isn't it raining now? City Council has choices and can make the right ones for our communities!