

# Women's Eyes on the Draft City Budget 2009



To make up for a \$35 million shortfall, the City Draft Budget proposes increasing user fees, raising bus fares, cutting city programs, reducing city jobs, reducing funding for community agencies and raising taxes by 5%. This would mean the broadest, deepest cut in services in the history of Ottawa.

## Why is there a funding shortfall?

- Inflation raises the cost of City services each year.
- Property taxes have not raised to cover this inflation.
- The city planned on new money for public health and other services from the provincial government that will not be available in the 2009 budget. A recent report revealed the province will be providing funds for welfare and court security, but very slowly over the next 10 years.

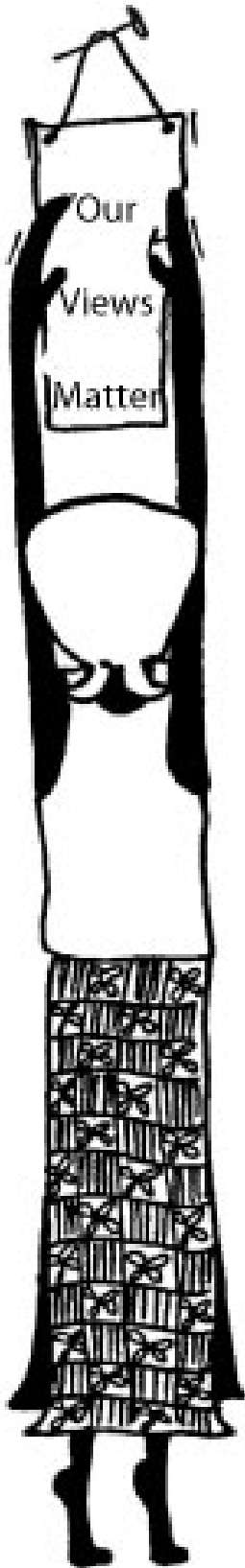
While the City waits for the province to upload costs, the draft city budget proposes to “download” the delivery of services onto community organizations, our families and our communities.

## What is in the Budget?

- **Cut funding to childcare and public health**  
The City proposes cutting its contribution to programs for which it shares funding responsibility with the province. This would result in the loss of 700 subsidized child care spaces and cutting public health programs for school based nutrition and nursing for long term care facilities.

**Concern:** Without access to subsidized childcare spaces, single mothers or working families who are living at or below the poverty level would be less likely to find or keep jobs. This could lead to more residents relying on welfare.

**Concern:** Children and elderly will not receive the public health care they need.



- **Elimination / service reductions on bus routes**

Service reductions would begin in April 2009. Residents would experience increased walking distance to the nearest bus stop, affecting 4.9 million customer-trips each year. Residents would also have longer waiting time during peak periods in certain parts of the City. There would be a decrease in evening and weekend service in some areas and elimination entirely in other parts of the City.

The following routes would have reduced service: 5, 6, 16, 18, 23, 25, 43, 51, 55, 87, 97, 101, 102, 105, 116, 117, 127, 128, 131, 136, 137, 141, 142, 146, 147, 149, 151, 152, 153, 154, 156, 165, 166, 167, 169, 171, 173, 174, 178, 181, 193, 306.

The following routes would be eliminated entirely: 23, 25, 43, 51, 55, 102, 117, 153, 167, 169, 181, 193, and 306. (See attached details of services that will be removed.)

**Concern:** Longer waits and longer walks could place women in more unsafe situations. Service reductions would remove transit as a travel choice for some residents, especially immigrant and others working irregular shifts, who may depend on these routes as their only transportation.

- **OC Transpo fares increase**

There will be a 7.5% increase in bus ticket in January; this raise was not to take place until July. The revenue from this extra six months will go to subsidize the cost of bus passes.

**Concern:** Those on low income who are more likely to use bus tickets will be subsidizing those with steady jobs, who are most likely to buy a buss pass.

Students over 24 will no longer qualify for student passes.

**Concern:** Many new Canadians and low-income residents going back to school at a later age would find transit fare unaffordable.

- **Increased sports/recreation fees and other city-run programs**

Recreation rental fees would go up by 51%.

**Concern:** Smaller organizations without financial cushion to cover higher costs for city facilities will have a hard time providing services. Plus, youth would have less access to recreation activities as many families could not afford the costs.

- **Substantial cuts to arts and culture**

Funding for festivals, cultural events and individual artists would be scrapped entirely; while funding for arts and heritage would drop by 42%.

**Concern:** Quality of life in our City would be affected and income generated from Arts would be lost.



- **Reduce funding to city-funded community agencies**

Funds to assist 107 organizations to meet rising costs, including salaries, would be deferred (not provided in this year's budget).

**Concern:** At a time when community agencies are asked to do more, they have no new funds to raise salaries or pay program costs.

- **Reduce social housing spending**

Cap rent supplement programs at 2008 funding levels.

**Concern:** This capping would reduce the total number of rent supplements available and therefore reduce the number of units that are subsidized.

- **Jobs cuts**

230 staff positions would be eliminated, which come on top of 100 staff cuts made in 2008.

**Concern:** Quality of service could be affected.

## Possible Alternatives To Cuts

- **Set a Social Services Levy** (special tax) to cover inflationary increases in human services. The city has a capital levy for roads and bridges. Why not set a levy for the social services?
- **Do not approve increases in police budget**  
Ottawa Police presented a budget with 5% increase, which raises property taxes 1%. However crime rates are decreasing and Ottawa is one of the safest cities in

Canada. Investing in social programs would help keep crime rates down rather than increasing police staff.

➤ **Raise property taxes above 5%**

The draft budget proposes a 4.9% increase. As 1% of this increase is to cover the increase in the police budget and 1.9% is allocated to build new capital items (roads, buildings), that leaves only a 2% tax increase to cover city programs. Given that the inflation rate for the things a city purchases is closer to 4%, there must be a tax increase of at least 7% to keep up with rate of inflation.

## What We Can Do: Make Our Views Known

- ❖ Attend a [ward consultation](#) (Nov 5 - 28)  
See **Sample Questions** below.
- ❖ Make a [5-minute presentation](#) and share your thoughts at Council, Dec 1 – 2
- ❖ Attend Budget approbation sessions during City Council meetings, Dec 3 – 5
- ❖ Write a letter, e-mail or call your [City Councillor](#) or the [Mayor](#) (remember you can leave a message)
- ❖ Write a letter to the editor of local papers
- ❖ Submit your views on the [city web-site](#)
- ❖ Call 311 (special budget line)
- ❖ Look for details on city web-site: [www.ottawa.ca](http://www.ottawa.ca)



