

# Draft City Budget 2012

## Develop your own messages to Council

### City for All Women Initiative (CAWI)

Women in the CAWI network have joined with other community groups to examine this year's draft budget. Here is what we learned and some sample messages.

Form your own opinion and develop your own messages to Council and the Media.  
**Your Views Matter!**





**General message:** We are happy to see that funds are being invested to maintain social services and that Council is continuing to invest upload dollars to address affordable housing. We are also pleased to see that recreation fees have been frozen for 2012 and transit fares are rising less than in previous years.



City Council needs to protect and enhance the programs and services that keep our families and our communities healthy, housed, cared for, and moving every day:


#### Five major issues of concern:




1. Funding City Services
2. Accessible Recreation
3. Investing in Affordable Housing
4. Childcare in our Schools
5. Our City Buses





The Issue	Draft budget proposes	Our Concerns	Sample Messages
<p><b>City Funding</b></p>  <p>Cities have a key role to play in providing social services, but property taxes and user fees alone cannot provide the funds needed.</p> <p>Cities need more funds from higher levels of government.</p> <p>The Ontario government in the 1990s downloaded onto cities the cost of social services (e.g. ODSP, Ontario Works, Public Health, Social Housing) without providing adequate funds or a new tax base. Now the province is at last taking back the cost of some services each year – “uploading”.</p>	<p>A 2.39% tax increase, less than the 2.5% increase per year promised by Mayor Watson in his election platform.</p> 	 <p>We are happy to see that funds are being invested to maintain social services and that Council is continuing to invest upload dollars to address the affordable housing issue. We are also pleased to see that recreation fees have been frozen for 2012 and transit fares are rising less than in previous years.</p> <p><b>However, property taxes pay for vital services that make this City work for everyone. If tax increases remain at 2.5% or less, we will eventually see our vital community services erode.</b></p>	<p>Mayor Jim Watson’s election platform committed to raising taxes by no more than 2.5% each year, but 2012 draft budget raises taxes by only 2.39%. If taxes were raised by 2.5% in 2012, there would be over 1 million dollars extra to fund vital community services that we all need to have a livable city.</p> <p>CAWI joins with the Coalition to Move Ottawa Forward to let you know we want to work with City Council to call on the provincial and federal government to provide more funds for cities.</p> 

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<p><b>Affordable Housing</b></p> <p>Housing organizations have called for the City to dedicate at least \$15 million a year for a housing fund to leverage money from other levels of government and private sector so as to build 1000 new homes and fix up existing ones.</p>  <p>This money is now available through the “upload” dollars that the City has received from the Province. Last year, the City invested \$14M towards housing and poverty reduction efforts. Most of this \$14M went towards the city’s Housing and Homelessness Investment Plan.</p>	<p>For 2012, the Housing and Homelessness Investment Plan allocates a further \$10M in operating dollars to help prevent and reduce homelessness and \$4 million to build new affordable housing.</p> <p>The newly announced Federal/Provincial <i>Investment in Affordable Housing Ontario Program</i> has allocated \$10.6 million to Ottawa for 2012.</p> <p>The Housing and Homelessness Investment Plan will fund programs such as: a rent supplement and housing allowance; housing support for families and individuals once they are housed; repairs to social housing; and Youth Futures and Youth At Risk Projects to assist with job training, life skills, job placements and post-secondary mentoring.</p>	 <p>There are 10,000 families on the waiting list for social housing.</p> <p>\$14 million is a significant investment that will help to address the affordable housing issue in our city.</p> <p>Affordable housing is an important aspect of the larger effort to reduce poverty that needs to happen in our City.</p> <p>We need to build on the good work already done through the Poverty Reduction Strategy initiated by the previous City Council and begin to address other issues, along with housing. Let’s not reinvent the wheel on this.</p>	<p>I am happy that this draft budget shows a continued commitment to affordable housing.</p> <p>This continues to be a big step forward in addressing the housing shortage in our city, with the support of the provincial and federal governments.</p> <p>This is a good investment. It’s cheaper to lift people out of poverty through affordable housing than to keep them locked in cycles of homelessness and relying on emergency services such as shelters and urgent care in the health care system.</p> <p>To address the other issues outlined in the Poverty Reduction Strategy, additional effort and additional funds are required.</p>

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<p><b>Our City Buses</b></p> <p>In the 2011 City Budget, \$7.1M was cut from the transit budget. <b>Only after the budget was set, a “Route Optimization” plan was presented for public consultation for input.</b></p>  <p>Many transit riders have since experienced long waits and very crowded buses.</p> <p>Thanks to a motion put forward by CAWI, City Council has required OC Transpo to use the City’s Equity and Inclusion Lens to evaluate the impact on these changes on the diversity of women and men in our city after a 6 month period.</p>	<p>\$5.5 million was added to the transit budget “ to address growing demands on our system” (ridership has increased, especially since the introduction of the U-Pass). Very crowded routes (87, 94, 95, 96) will be improved first.</p> <p>Raise fares by 2.5% (rate of inflation) to take effect July 1, 2012.</p> <p>The U-Pass will to increase from \$145 per term to \$180 in September 2012. The City states that this increase keeps the pass “revenue neutral”, meaning it just covers costs.</p> <p>Rural Para Transpo fares will all be \$8.25 one way, eliminating different fare zones</p> <p>The “Smart Card” system will be introduced in Spring 2012, eliminating the need for adult and senior annual passes and regular OC Transpo passes.</p>	<p>The Transit Commission will be presenting its Business Plan 2012 on December 21<sup>st</sup>, which will include service improvements to routes that are now very crowded. Since these changes will come into effect January 1<sup>st</sup>, what opportunities will residents have to comment on the proposed improvements before they happen?</p> <p>A study done through the University of Ottawa and Carleton University suggests that the increased U-Pass fare is not revenue neutral, but revenue generating, because the City has not taken into account some of the cost-saving features of the U-Pass.</p> <p>With the elimination of the senior and adult annual passes, and the introduction of the Presto Smart Card, will all Ottawa residents who now need and use their transit discount passes experience the same savings as before?</p>	<p>Affordable and accessible public transit is essential in a city like Ottawa. People need a good transit system to get to work, get to school, to daycare, to medical appointments and more.</p> <p>Women need bus services that allow us to take buses safely at night, transport our families and often arrive at work at irregular hours.</p> <p>We look forward to participating in a thorough evaluation of the ‘Route Optimization’ plan according to the motion brought forward by CAWI.</p> <p>It is the responsibility of City Council to listen carefully to its transit riders to ensure that we have the best transit system possible, and to fully determine needs before finalizing budget lines.</p>

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<p><b>Childcare</b></p> <p>Show leadership. It is the responsibility of the City, with financial support from the province, to protect childcare spaces as the Full-Day Learning Program rolls out.</p>  <p>Many families do not know if spaces will be there for them or if they will be able to afford them as Full Day Learning changes the child care needs of Ottawa families.</p>	<p>As in 2011, the budget allocates \$750,000 for non-profit community childcare agencies for capital improvements to support the transition to serving younger children that will result as the Full Day Learning Program is rolled out.</p> <p>As in 2011, the budget allows for a 2.5% increase in childcare operating costs for childcare partners, to cover the costs of inflation.</p>	 <p>This money set aside will help; however, it is far from enough. There will be centre closures in the coming years as a result of the provincial changes to full day kindergarten. This means that some childcare programs will close.</p> <p>The child care community wants the City to work closely with them to call on the provincial government to provide more funding to help keep centres open and responding to community needs. We need these dollars to be matched by a continued leadership on the part of the city to see that a transformation to a new system will benefit children and families in our city.</p>	<p>Having affordable childcare is critical for me and women I know.</p> <p>I am pleased that the City has committed a further \$750,000 for non-profit community childcare, but we need additional funds from other levels of government to provide keep centres open and respond to community needs.</p> <p>I want to see a City Council that is committed to working closely with the community to call on the provincial government to provide more funding to childcare.</p> 

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<p><b>Accessible Recreation</b></p>  <p>Recreation fees were frozen last year but remain unaffordable for many residents. Fee assistance (fee subsidies) is available for low-income families, but funds are limited.</p> <p>The City has drafted a Recreation Master Plan that includes a Social Strategy with guiding principles about making recreation accessible to low-income residents. CAWI played an important role in the development of the Social Strategy.</p>	<p>The 2012 Draft Budget will freeze, for a second year, most recreation fees, as did the 2011 Budget.</p> <p>\$500,000 has been allocated to implement the Parks and Recreation Master Plan to ‘ensure our services are accessible and inclusive to priority populations and provide benefits to children, youth and seniors.’</p> <p>A Budget Briefing Note states that “no inflationary increase to recreation fees will increase tax support to programs and <b>require the department to reduce some components of programs that have seen inflationary increases to avoid over-expenditure.</b>”</p>	 <p>The Budget Briefing Note suggests that freezing recreation fees may result in cuts to staff or programs.</p> <p>Our concern is that such cuts might decrease the opportunities for low-income residents, adults and children, to participate in programs that help them stay healthy and active.</p>	<p>Freezing recreation fees is a very positive step forward in making the programs more accessible.</p> <p>But we want to be sure that this will not result in a cut to services or staff that will affect the quality and availability of recreation services, particularly in low-income communities.</p> <p>We look forward to working collaboratively with City Council and staff to implement the Parks and Recreation Master Plan as approved by Council.</p> <p>Accessible and inclusive recreation programs will help to ensure that <u>all</u> Ottawa residents have the opportunity to lead healthy and active lives.</p>