

**Draft City Budget 2008
December 3, 2007**

**Jane Ogden,
Cornerstone Women's Shelter and
Women's Action Team on Safe and Affordable Housing**

**Nubia Cermeno
Women's Action Team on Employment and Training**

We are pleased to be here today to represent two Women Action Teams in the network of the City for All Women Initiative.

My name is Jane Ogden, I live in Councillor Diane Holmes ward, at McPhail House, a residence of Cornerstone Women's Shelter.

The Women's Action Team on Safe and Affordable Housing is comprised of women from across the city who has struggled to find safe and affordable housing for themselves, their families or other women.

Personally, I know how important investing in housing, shelter and city services is for everyone in our city. It was only a few years ago, that I was working as a professional woman and never imagined that I would find myself facing homelessness and living in a shelter. It can happen to anyone in this room.

We are pleased that members of City Council and the Mayor have made a public statement that you will not reduce front line services in order to keep taxes low. We join with you in recognizing the importance of raising property taxes to the amount necessary to make sure the city can deliver these services.

First, we are concerned that reductions in city staff will lower standards and quality of service. For example the proposed reduction of 3 full-time employees in the affordable housing development program could eliminate capacity building and on-going support to developers, which will reduce the cities capacity to respond to future capital funding opportunities for affordable housing. Given the state of affordable housing in Ottawa and the important priorities outlined in the new Housing Strategy, such a cut in staff could indeed have a negative impact on quality of life in our city.

We ask you to consider the long-term impact of reducing city staff and with them the cities capacity to plan, monitor and facilitate vital community services – like affordable housing.

Hello, my name is Nubia Cermeño, I live in Clive Doucet's ward and represent the Women's Action Team on Employment and Training. Our action team is focused on helping the city to take measures that will improve the opportunities of women new to Canada to obtain good jobs.

We are concerned that cuts you are considering will make it more difficult for immigrant women and their families. The original budget identified cuts to immigrant services – are these cuts still on the table and what exactly are they? Cutting staff without a clear understanding of the impact on new programs like Immigrant Ottawa Initiative puts these programs in jeopardy. We need some assurance there will be staff resources to get this initiative off the ground.

While we are thankful Council responded to concerns of residents by putting forward the motion passed this morning – it makes it incredibly difficult for us to respond to. Though it identifies what will not be cut, it does not mention what will be cut or the level of user fee increases. **Will there be additional cuts to bus routes or other vital services? Will user fees increase and create barriers for low-income residents to participate in recreation programs?**

The public needs to have more information if we are going to give informed opinion on this budget. We need to know what exactly is on the table. **I know that many like us are concerned that the police will receive a whopping 8.8% increase in their budget while vital city programs and services face uncertain cuts.**

We were pleased that City Council demonstrated leadership by taking part in today's march to Parliament Hill to convince the federal government to transfer one cent of the GST tax to municipalities.

We ask that Council continue to demonstrate this strong leadership with both the provincial and federal government to secure more sustainable ways of funding our cities.

Thank you.