



*Making Voices Count works with city decision makers to create a city for all. It is driven by residents, the Coalition of Community Health and Resource Centres, City for All Women Initiative, and community partners*

## **A 2018 City of Ottawa Budget for All: Community Asks and Background Document**

September 28, 2017

Investing in social infrastructure means investing in the health and wellbeing of Ottawa residents. Social infrastructure is all our community resources combined. It is the organizations, services, people and networks that support the health and wellbeing of our communities. Ottawa's social infrastructure includes important services we need like housing, good food for all, recreation, childcare, public transit, community services, long term care, employment, education and healthcare. It is just as important as building physical infrastructure (such as LRT, roads, and sewage).

Strong social infrastructure helps us have healthy communities and wellbeing for everyone. The health and wellbeing of Ottawa residents can be measured by Canadian Index of Wellbeing (CIW) indicators. CIW shows the multiple and interconnected aspects of wellbeing beyond economic productivity (i.e. Gross Domestic Product), similar to the Social Determinants of Health perspective. It is also useful in showing how changes in specific policies and programs can impact different domains and thereby influence the wellbeing of Canadians.

Communities and the City of Ottawa have the collective responsibilities to work with the federal and provincial governments, and charitable and non-profit organizations to achieve the common good.

### **2018 Budget Asks from Making Voices Count**

#### **We are asking Ottawa City Council to:**

1. Invest an additional \$500,000 of base fund and a 2% cost of living adjustment to address complex needs and increasing demand for services.
2. Create a new on ramp fund of \$500,000 to allow community initiatives that do not receive renewable City funding to have access to new funds to address new and emerging needs.
3. Restore \$4 million of City capital funding to the Action Ottawa housing budget consistent with the City's 10 year Housing and Homelessness Plan.

## 1. Invest an additional \$500,000 in base fund and a 2% cost of living adjustment to address complex needs and increasing demand for services.

Background: Community and social service providers continue to face challenges because they cannot keep pace with residents' increasing demand for social support and population growth.

- Results from a 2016 Making Voices Count survey of City-funded community and social service providers demonstrated that Ottawa's most vulnerable residents are facing longer wait times and service reductions. Of the 66 community and social service providers that responded to the survey, 93% have experienced an increase in demand for services. Between 2011 and 2015:
  - The number of residents served increased by an average of 66%.
  - Increased demand ranged from 17% to 300%.
- In the 2017 City budget, the Ottawa City Council realized the needs in communities and created a \$500,000 fund to assist community and social service providers to keep pace with demand, and another \$110,000 to keep pace with inflation.
- **Need for this increase:** Last year, the total amount of funds requested from the \$500,000 sustainability fund was \$2.8 million. This shows the size of the problem and the need to increase this amount by another \$500,000 this year.
- **Allocation of funds in 2017:** Last year, funds were distributed in an equitable way in which each provider received the same proportion of what they had requested, but this meant that those that requested low amounts received very small amounts, and that most providers did not receive the amount needed to address the identified need.
- **Proposed allocation in 2018:** We propose that in 2018, City-funded community and social service providers would submit proposals to be assessed based on established criteria (i.e. address acute needs, shorten waiting list, address one-time surge in demand). An allocation committee will include residents who are not connected to any of the 93 funded providers. The committee will review proposals based on a ranking system in which providers with the highest acuity will receive funding.
  - This will mean that not all providers will receive funding, but those with the most expressed need will. The availability of these funds will encourage providers to document the growing demand for their service in relation to their capacity to respond, which, in turn, can help to inform long-term sustainability planning.
- Increasing the minimum wage to \$15 by January 1, 2019 is a positive step towards a more livable wage. However, community and social service providers are concerned that this will create additional funding pressure for them as staff salaries will go up.

**2. Create a new on ramp fund of \$500,000 to allow community initiatives that do not receive renewable City funding to have access to new funds to address new and emerging needs.**

Background: Community initiatives, who are responding to new and emerging issues by providing important services to residents, should be able to access support from the City like other City-funded service providers.

- In 2013 the Community Project Grants were cancelled. These grants had provided small grants to address new and emerging issues. The community funding envelope has been effectively frozen for a decade or more.
- Over this period the population growth of Ottawa has been higher than national and provincial averages.
- The project grant program was utilized by the City as a way for new initiatives to establish their credibility and effectiveness in service delivery and then be considered for sustaining funding.
- There are community initiatives that are responding to new and emerging issues by providing important and valuable services to residents, and should be able to access support.
- There has been tremendous community need for Good Food for All that is fresh, accessible, affordable, minimally processed, produced as locally as possible, and culturally appropriate. These initiatives need support.

**3. Restore \$4 million of City capital funding to the Action Ottawa housing budget consistent with the City's 10 year Housing and Homelessness Plan.**

Background: The current funding is not enough for building new affordable housing and creating more rent-geared-to-income housing.

- Under the Healthy and Caring Communities of 2015-2018 Term of Council Priorities, Priority 3 is to create new affordable housing options. The goal of Strategic Initiative 40: Ten Year Housing and Homelessness Plan is to “decrease the annual average number of families who stayed in motels by 30% by the end of Q4 2018” and “decrease the cost of emergency shelter response by 20% by Q4 2018 and reinvest all savings in housing and supports” (City of Ottawa 2015-2018 Strategic Plan, 2015, pg 49).
- Lack of funding for new housing and more rent-geared-to-income to support low-income families:
  - The Ottawa average number of social and affordable housing units per 1,000 people is 24.4 units (Ottawa Community Foundation, 2016).
  - In 2015, the City of Ottawa transferred \$4 million of capital budget to operating budget. The \$4 million was previously allocated to develop new affordable housing.
  - In 2016, an average of 347 individuals per night, equating to 91 family and couple households, were placed in off-site motels. The cost of providing safe

shelter for all of these households in motels was nearly \$4.5 million over the year. These motels provide an emergency response, but funds could be better invested in housing solutions to address the long-term needs of families.

- More individuals are accessing shelters. Shelters are overflowing. The pressure on the whole social housing system is overwhelming.
  - In 2015, data showed an increase in families accessing shelter. This trend continues. Ottawa's family shelters are full.
  - In 2016, there was an increase in the number of individuals using an emergency shelter: from 6,815 individuals in 2015 to 7,170 in 2016, an increase of 355 individuals, or 5.2% (Alliance to End Homelessness Ottawa, 2016, pg 4).
  - More single women accessing shelters in 2016. Especially older women over 50 years old. From 2015 to 2016, shelters saw a 20.1% increase in the number of women over 50 and a 31.2% increase among those over 60. For women over 60, their average length of stay increased from 76 days in 2014, to 82 days in 2015, to 86 days in 2016. (Alliance to End Homelessness Ottawa, 2016, pg 5).
  - The proportion of young people aged 16-17 within youth shelters is increasing (Alliance to End Homelessness Ottawa, 2016, pg 6).
- Thousands of people are on the subsidized housing waiting list.
  - Number of Ottawa households on wait list for rent-geared-to-income housing in 2014 was 10,312 (Ottawa Community Foundation, 2016).
  - The time on waiting list varies, but can be 5 years or more (The Social Housing Registry of Ottawa <http://www.housingregistry.ca/faqs/> ).
- We're losing ground each year, because we're losing more affordable housing units than we're creating.
- Investment toward housing is better than an emergency response.
- The City needs to do more. This is a crisis that won't be solved by moving dollars from one pot to another.
- When the federal and provincial governments give more money to the City we need to use it to do more. If we use new funds to maintain the status quo we're losing ground.