

MAKING VOICES COUNT

A KIT FOR ENGAGING CITY DECISION MAKERS



COALITION OF COMMUNITY HEALTH
AND RESOURCE CENTRES OF OTTAWA
COALITION DES CENTRES DE RESSOURCES
ET DE SANTÉ COMMUNAUTAIRES D'OTTAWA



City for All Women Initiative
Initiative: une ville pour toutes les femmes

ABOUT THIS KIT

FALL 2016

This kit encourages the long-term civic engagement of residents. It helps residents bring community concerns to the attention of City decision-makers so that positive change happens. This kit originated from an initiative originally called Making Votes Count, funded by the Ontario Trillium Foundation and the Catherine Donnelly Foundation, engaging Ottawa residents living on low-income in elections (2013-2016). Currently called Making Voices Count (MVC), with additional funds from United Way Ottawa, MVC is an initiative of the Coalition of Community Health and Resource Centres, the City for All Women Initiative (CAWI), community partners and residents to work with City of Ottawa decision-makers to create a city for all.

This Civic Engagement Kit was identified by the Coalition of Community Health and Resource Centres (CCHRC) as an important tool for its staff, Board members and advocacy groups to help the Coalition build the long-term civic engagement of residents and bring issues to the City of Ottawa for change. City for All Women Initiative (CAWI) remains committed to its history of training and supporting women to have a voice in city decision making.

In using this kit, we can influence and bring positive change for the health and wellbeing of all Ottawa residents. We especially want to engage residents whose voices are least likely to be heard by City decision makers, including women from diverse backgrounds, people who are racialized, Aboriginal, LGBTQ+, newcomers, older adults, youth, people living with a disability, and/or people living in poverty and rural residents.

We thank those who contributed their ideas and experience through the Working Committee: Gillian Keefe, Community Development Framework; Emilie Hayes, Somerset West Community Health Centre; Susan Kuruvilla, South Nepean Community Health Centre; Tammy Corner, Pinecrest Queensway Community Health Centre,; Heather Badenoch (Village PR); Andrea Balfour, community leader, City for All Women Initiative (CAWI); Lisa Quesnel, community leader, CAWI; Suzanne Doerge, CAWI,; and Tong Zhao-Ansari, CAWI.

The material in this kit has been adapted from CAWI's Civic Participation Kit and the Community Development Framework's Creating the Change We Want Guide. We thank the Ontario Coalition for Better Childcare for materials, which were adapted for the original kit.

Together, we contribute to better city decision-making.

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**1 CITY HALL
AND YOU**

EVERYONE'S VOICE MATTERS

For many of us, governments and the work of politicians seems far-removed from our daily lives. We may not see many people who look like ourselves among the leadership of our city. We may question whether the people elected will actually understand or represent our interests.

We may find it hard to speak up. We may have been raised in a country where speaking up was not allowed. Or, as women, we learned that men made important decisions. Or we found our opinion was less valued because of the colour of our skin, our indigeneity, language, income, sexual identity or disability.

We Have a Lot to Contribute

Government can be difficult to influence. On the other hand, it's important to recognize the contribution of Ottawa's diverse residents can build a better city.

We know our city because we live and work here. We see the needs of those around us. We have our own experiences. We know what is needed to make our city a better place because we:

- Live and volunteer in our communities.
- Provide and receive services.
- Care for our families.



Improving Ottawa's Community Wellbeing

The Canadian Index of Wellbeing measures how people are doing. It measures areas of education, employment, feeling safe and engaged, as well as having access to quality health and social services.

A report in 2014, "[Bridging the Gap: The Ottawa Community Wellbeing Report 2014](#)", released by the Association of Ontario Health Centres (AOHC) and the Coalition of Community Health and Resource Centres of Ottawa (CHRC), made visible the extent to which people are experiencing wellbeing in Ottawa.

- One in ten people in Ottawa live in poverty, highlighting the income gap between the affluent and everyone else.
- Housing affordability is a high concern with one in every five families in Ottawa. They spend over one-third of their income on shelter.
- Food security is a challenge with eight per cent of Ottawa households. They are not able to get to nor afford nutritious food.
- Public transit is key for low income people to access services, yet one-third of Ottawa residents expressed dissatisfaction with the public transportation services provided by the municipal government.

We can work with our City Council to improve this.

We Can Make a Difference

There are success stories of residents and community organizations in Ottawa speaking up and being heard by City staff and City Council. Being heard is the first step towards positive change. We can build on these experiences and then pass our learning on to our communities. We have both a right and responsibility to do so.



“When I dare to be powerful, to use my strength in the service of my vision, then it becomes less and less important whether I am afraid.”

Audre Lorde

When we dare to speak out on our concerns, we dare to be powerful.

CITY GOVERNMENT AND YOU

We use city services every day. When we turn on the water, walk down the street, take the bus or take a book out of the library, we are using city services. These services affect our lives everyday.

Our municipal government, the City of Ottawa, has all or partial responsibility for the following services:

- Child Care
- City Police
- Community Funding
- Crime Prevention
- Cultural Services
- Employment and Training
- Financial Assistance
- Fire Department
- Garbage and Recycling
- Housing and Shelter
- Long Term Care for the Elderly
- Paramedics
- Parks
- Protection of Green Spaces and the Environment
- Public Health
- Public Library
- Public Transit
- Recreation
- Roads
- Water and Sewage

Decisions that affect our everyday lives are made by three levels of government: **federal, provincial, and municipal.**

Federal and provincial governments have more power to raise funds than municipal government. They set rules that municipalities are required to follow, like who is responsible for what and where tax money goes.

To learn more about how the provincial and federal governments work, see Appendix A and B.



WHO DOES WHAT?

FEDERAL / CANADA / Member of Parliament - MP

Canada Post National Museums CBC Human Rights Commission Supreme Court
 RCMP (national police) Child tax benefit Employment Insurance
 Maternity leave and parental benefits Canada Pension Plan Social Insurance Numbers
 Citizenship and Immigration Passport services Statistics Canada (Census)
 Disability pensions Child Disability Benefit Military Foreign Affairs

PROVINCIAL

ONTARIO
 Member of Provincial
 Parliament - MPP

Hydro
 Electricity
 Schools
 Childcare
 Children's Aid
 Medicare
 Long-term care
 Driver's licenses
 Provincial parks
 Provincial highways
 Air and water quality
 Employment Rights
 Newcomer settlement
 Transit funding to Cities
 Correctional services
 Provincial Police (OPP)
 Provincial courts and Legal Aid
 Colleges and universities

Funds and sets rules for:

Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP)
 Ontario Works
 Income Supports
 Public Health

SHARED RESPONSIBILITY

Roads Police Laws Environment
 Tourism Parks

**Share costs of some services like
 social housing and public transit.**

Federal and provincial governments set
 some rules that the lower level of government
 (provincial, municipal) are mandated to follow.
 Federal and provincial governments have more
 ways to raise funds than municipalities. So
 municipalities depend upon them to help
 pay the costs of City services.

MUNICIPAL

OTTAWA
 City Councillor

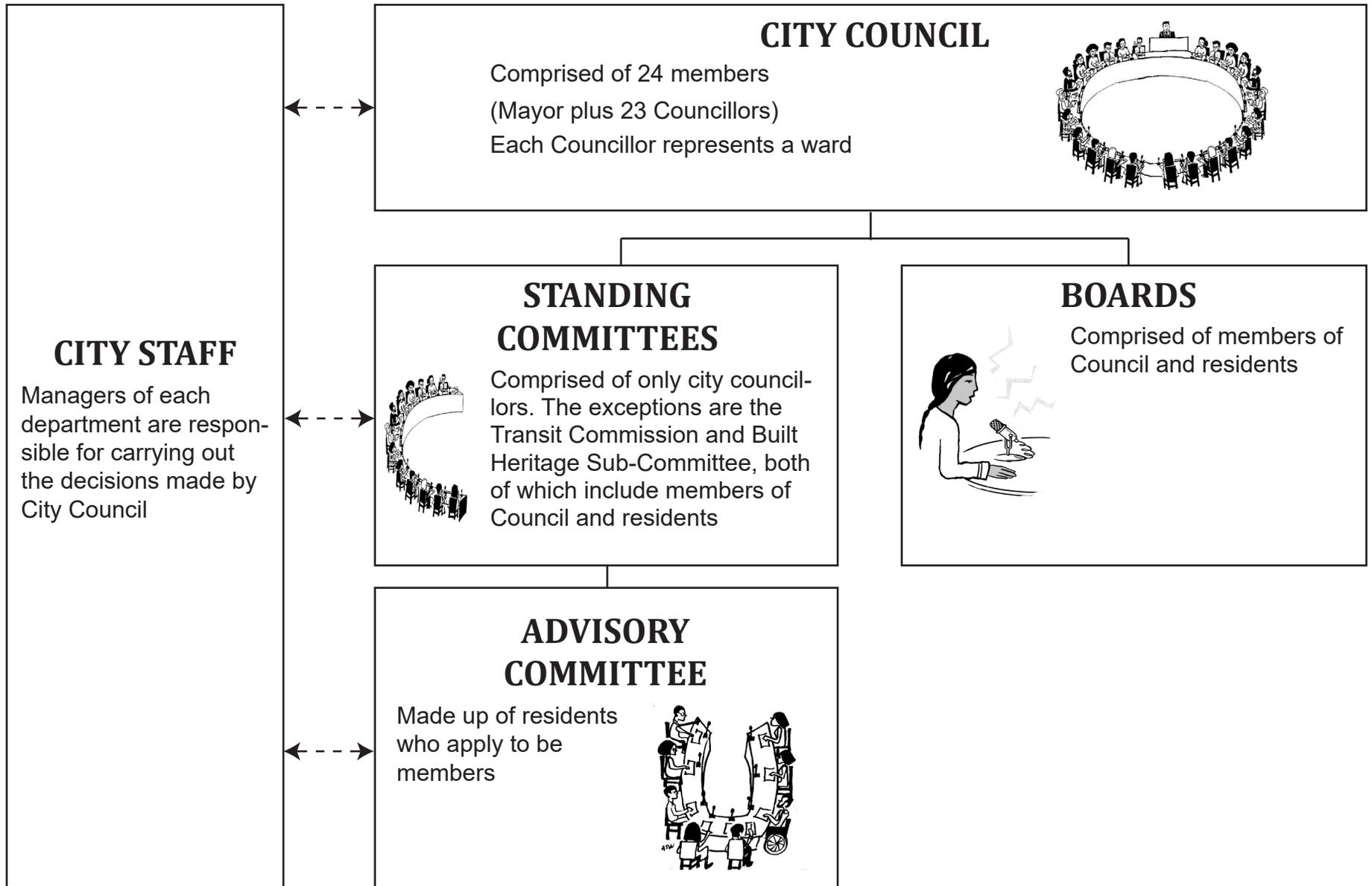
Art
 Culture
 Water
 Sewage
 Libraries
 City parks
 Recreation
 Animal control
 Parking
 Public transit
 Road maintenance
 Snow removal
 By-law services
 Seniors' homecare
 Garbage and recycling
 Social housing management
 Affordable housing programs
 Fire, police, ambulance, paramedics
 Community & Social Services (Childcare centres
 and Waitlist, Community Health and Resource
 Centres, Councelling and Support Programs,
 Day Programs, Food Programs, Child and Youth
 Programs, Community Development)

Provides funding and administration for:

Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP)
 Ontario Works
 Income Supports
 Public Health

Adapted from: Creating the Change We Want - A
 Guide to Building Neighbourhood Capacity, Page 88

HOW CITY GOVERNMENT WORKS

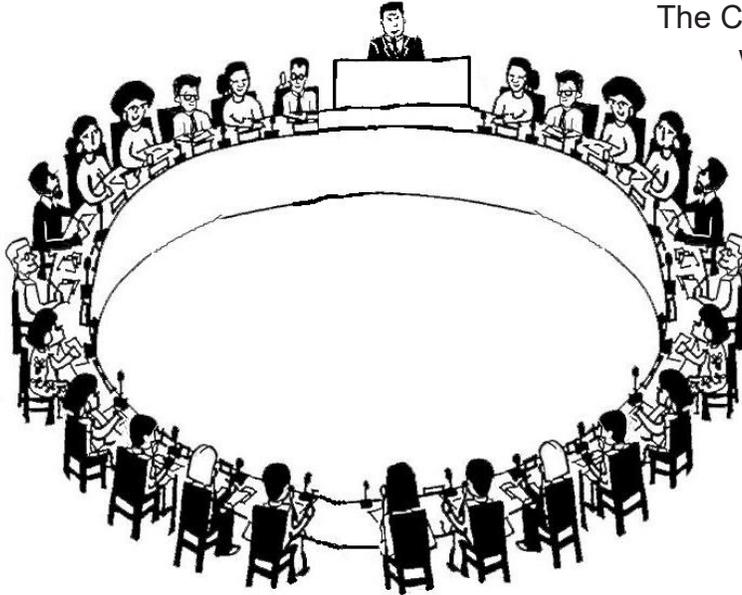


City Decision Making

City Council

The City of Ottawa has a 24-member Council: the Mayor and 23 councillors. Members of Council are elected by residents for a 4-year term.

The Mayor represents the City of Ottawa as a whole, chairs city council meetings and may chair Standing Committee meetings.



The Councillors each represents one of 23 wards within the City of Ottawa.

City Council is the decision-making body responsible for turning community needs into municipal services — from human services (also called social infrastructure), such as social services and housing, and public transit to hard services (also called physical infrastructure), like roads and waste management.

Standing Committees

To assist it in its deliberations, City Council appoints Standing Committees to study issues and to make recommendations to Council. These Standing Committees are made up of elected representatives. The exceptions are the Transit Commission and Built Heritage Sub-Committee, both of which include members of Council and residents. It is at the Standing Committee level where residents can make presentations to express their views. Most decisions made by Standing Committees require final approval by City Council.

Ottawa Standing Committees

- Agriculture and Rural Affairs Committee (ARAC)
- Audit Committee
- Community and Protective Services Committee (CPS)
- Environment Committee
- Finance and Economic Development Committee (FEDCO)
- Planning Committee
- Transit Commission
- Transportation Committee

Check the City website: <http://ottawa.ca/en/city-hall/your-city-government/standing-committees> (subject to change)

Ottawa Advisory Committees

- Accessibility
- Environmental Stewardship
- Arts, Culture, Heritage and Recreation
- French Language Services

See the list of advisory committees on the City of Ottawa website: <http://ottawa.ca/en/city-hall/your-city-government/advisory-committee>

Advisory Committees

The City of Ottawa also has four advisory committees, made up of community volunteers, appointed by Council. The advisory committees provide advice to City Council on specific areas of interest.

These committees contribute to the development of policies, programs and initiatives that enhance quality of life for Ottawa residents.

Ottawa City Boards

City boards are composed of members of City Council and residents appointed by Council. They provide advice to City Council, and contribute to the development of policies, programs and initiatives. Members generally serve terms of two or four years and membership is tied to the Term of Council. Members are eligible to serve a maximum of two consecutive terms on the same committee or board (a maximum of eight years)

Ottawa City Boards:

- Board of Health
- Community Housing Cooperation
- Crime Prevention
- Hydro Ottawa Board
- Library Board
- Police Services Board

Residents can apply to become a member of a board. The recruitment for boards is held early in each term of Council and again approximately mid-term.

City boards hold regular meetings.



City Staff

City staff manage the operations of the City and present reports to Council to receive direction. They follow the strategic plan as set by Council for each term of Council. In consulting with the public, they are to follow the principles of the City's [Public Engagement Strategy](#) and apply the [Equity and Inclusion Lens](#) to all aspects of their work.

[City staff](#) working on a specific issue or report for Council can be contact to provide information.

When Council Meets

City Council usually meets at 10 am on the second and fourth Wednesday of each month (except in March, July, August and December). They meet in Andrew S. Haydon Hall at City Hall. Special council meetings and committees-of-the-whole are called as needed, especially at budget time. All meetings are held at Ottawa City Hall.

Council and standing committee meetings are advertised in the City webpage in the Friday's edition of Ottawa's daily newspapers, as well as the City of Ottawa website.

For more information, contact a committee coordinator, listed on the [City of Ottawa website](#).

Open to the public
All Council and Standing Committee meetings are open to the public, unless an in-camera session is called. You can:

- Sit in the public gallery to observe, or
- Watch from your own home.
- Council meetings are televised live on Rogers Television, cable 22. (Rogers television communautaire 23, en français).
- Council meetings are streamed live on the [City of Ottawa website](#).

A CITY BUDGET FOR ALL

Ontario cities have two ways to raise funds: property taxes and user fees. We pay user fees when we use services like water, swimming lessons, sewage and transit.

Cities do not have enough revenue to cover the cost of all the services they provide so they rely on higher levels of government (provincial and federal) to transfer funds for vital programs and services.

Did you know that Ontario is the only province in Canada that pays for social services with property taxes? This creates a revenue problem. We can work together to ensure that provincial and federal governments fix the funding formula to make more money available for our cities and make services for people a priority again.

The health of our communities depends upon it.

Where Governments Get Their Money

For every dollar collected in taxes, the Federal government gets 47 cents, the Province of Ontario gets 44 cents, and Ontario cities get only 9 cents.

FEDERAL (47 cents)	PROVINCIAL (44 cents)	MUNICIPAL (9 cents)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal income tax • Corporate income tax • GST/HST (Goods and Services tax/Harmonized Tax) • Employment Insurance, Premiums • Alcohol, gas, custom tax 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal income tax • Corporate income tax • GST/HST (Goods and Services tax /Harmonized Tax) • Transfers (\$) from federal government 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Property Taxes • User Fees (transit, recreation, water, sewage, garbage) • Transfers (\$) from federal and provincial governments

Not All Taxes are the Same

Regressive Taxes

Everyone pays the same regardless of income. This places a greater burden on people on lower or fixed incomes.

Progressive Taxes

People and corporations pay differently according to their income. In theory, the more the income, the higher the taxes.



Contributing to Good City Budgets

People around the globe are taking a look at the budgets of city governments and calling for changes that will better meet the needs of their families and communities.

Why Now?

Since the 1990s, responsibilities have been passed down to municipal governments without adequate resources. This means the City of Ottawa has been paying for services that used to be paid for by the provincial government. Even though the provincial government has been “uploading” (reassuming the costs of some social services), many services continue to be reduced. This is having an impact on people who are marginalized.

For example, women, who still tend to assume more responsibility as family caregivers and community volunteers, may have more unpaid work to do. Their paid work may diminish, because they are more likely to work in the “caring” professions where cuts are most likely to occur. This threatens gains women have made in reducing violence against women and accessing quality child care.

People living in poverty, people with disabilities, Aboriginal people, racialized people, recent immigrants, refugees and transgender people are also more likely to feel the impact of budget cuts, because they typically rely more on community services.

The experiences of all these communities and the agencies working with them need to be heard.

Budgets are Not Boring

The budget is not just about dollars and cents. It's about our quality of life and our communities.

The City of Ottawa budget is a blueprint for how our property tax dollars will be spent. It spells out the priorities for the municipal services and programs that we depend on each and every day.

Planning a City Budget

Think about it. The water we use each morning, the bus we take, the park where we picnic, the paramedics who respond to an emergency in our neighbourhood, the community house and the community centre. These are all services included in the City of Ottawa budget.



Just Like Home

A city budget is like our budget at home. We have to look at our needs, the amount of income we have and any savings put away, and then decide what we can afford.

A budget is made up of four parts:

- **Operating Budget** – This is like your monthly bills such as rent or mortgage, heating, water, electricity, clothing, laundry, food, child care, medicines and car repairs – you name it! For the City, it's the day-to-day operations, including programs and services such as administration, policing, public health, recycling and recreation.
- **Capital Budget** – This is like the money you need to pay for buildings, systems and belongings. For us, it's repairs on your home, replace a car, a broken alarm clock or mend a broken fence. If you buy a home, it's the down payment on the mortgage. For the City, it includes costs for buildings, vehicles, roads, sewers, bridges, community centres and parks.
- **Revenue** – This is like the total income earned by everyone at your house. The total of what everyone makes. The City, revenue includes taxes, money from the federal and provincial governments (called 'transfer payments') and user fees.
- **Reserve Funds** – This is like your savings, pension, retirement fund, and/or RRSPs. This is money to fall back on when you need it or for planned future capital costs. For the City, reserve fund is cushion to deal with unexpected expenses and a savings account for planned projects.



Each year, the City goes through a budget process to determine how much it will need to spend on a daily basis (operating budget), how much to repair or purchase on buildings, roads, sewers (capital budget), and how much money it has to set aside for unexpected expenses.

Budget Words

Budget

A plan for how the City gets money (revenue) and spends money (expenditure). The City of Ottawa sets its budget once a year, but their Long Range Financial Plan sets guidelines for three years.

Cost-sharing

One level of government (federal, provincial or municipal) partners with another level of government to fund a service or facility. For example, the Province of Ontario pays 75% of public health costs and each city pays 25%.

Deficit

It is the opposite of surplus – the amount remaining if the amount of money spent is greater than the amount of money received. This word usually refers to the government's deficit which develops when budgets are over-spent. In Ontario, municipalities are not allowed to approve a budget with a deficit.

Downloading

One level of government passes on the cost and/or administration of a project or service to another level of government, usually without enough funds to support it. Example: during the 1990's, the Ontario government downloaded partial cost and/or administration of affordable housing, child care, Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP), social assistance and public health.

Expenditures

Expense incurred by a government. The opposite of revenue.

Fiscal Imbalance

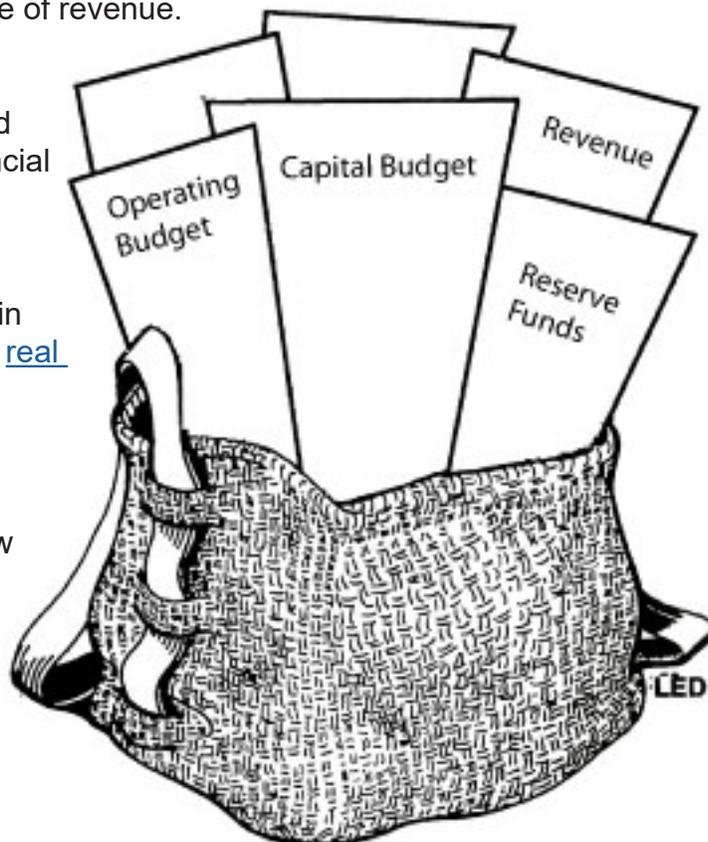
The current mismatch in the revenue powers and expenditure responsibilities of the federal, provincial and municipal governments.

GST (Goods and Services Tax)

A tax that applies to most supplies and services in Canada. These goods and services also include [real property](#) and [intangible personal property](#)

HST (Harmonized Sales Tax)

Provincial and federal sales tax combined. The provinces that have harmonized tax are New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Newfoundland and Labrador, Ontario and Prince Edward Island.



Income tax

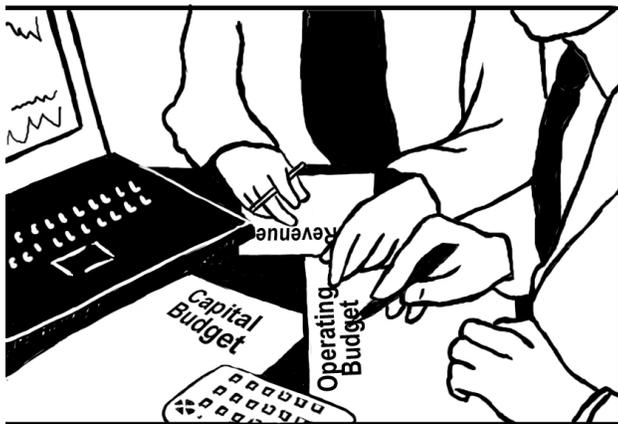
A tax that governments collect from people, for-profit organizations and companies. The amount collected is rated according to income.

Infrastructure

Physical infrastructure is the environment which can be physically built, such as roads, buildings, bike paths, sewage, etc. Keep reading for a definition of social infrastructure.

Management efficiencies

Identifying ways to reduce spending which could mean laying off staff, or not replacing those who leave their positions. It also includes changing how services are delivered. For example, less staff to human services and more using the internet. This could lead to reduced quality of service, stressful working conditions for City staff and contracting out of services to the private sector.



Municipal Infrastructure Imbalance

Municipal governments have increasing responsibilities, but have fewer ways of raising funds than provincial and federal governments.

In the case of Ontario, for every tax dollar collected in Canada, the federal government receives 50 cents, the provincial government receives 42 cents, and municipal governments receive the remaining 8 cents.

For municipal governments and their taxpayers, the result is a chronic financial squeeze.

Progressive taxes

People and corporations pay differently according to their income. In theory, the higher the income, the higher the taxes, but with tax loopholes and breaks, given to high income earners, this is not always the case.

Regressive taxes

Taxes in which everyone pays the same regardless of income.

Reserve funds

Money put aside to be used in case of emergencies for operations. There are capital reserves where the City directs money toward planned projects. In recent years, the City of Ottawa has used reserve funds to cover operational deficits and, in this way, reduced the reserve funds available for emergencies.

Revenue

Sources of income. Sources of revenue for municipal governments include money transferred from federal government, provincial government, property taxes and user fees. Revenue is the opposite of expenditures.

Social Infrastructure

All community resources combined including the organizations, social services, and networks that support our community. Strong social infrastructure supports community health and wellbeing.

Subsidy

Financial assistance to pay all or part of a cost. For example, an individual may receive subsidized housing if she or he can't afford to pay the full price. A corporation may receive a subsidy to grow food or to produce missiles.

Surplus

The amount of money that remains when income is greater than expenditures and/or expenses. The opposite of a deficit.

Transparency

When discussion and decisions happen in the public with full disclosure and public access.

Uploading

When a level of government decides it cannot manage the responsibility or cost; and hands back the cost and/or administration of a service to the level of government that originally downloaded it. For example: Ontario government is currently “uploading” the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP), Public Health, and Ontario Works over several years.

User Fees

Fees charged to use services. For municipalities, this includes services like parking, recreation fees, water and sewage, and transit fares.



ENGAGING CITY DECISION MAKERS



We can Make a Difference

People from all walks of life can influence city government on how decisions and policies are made.

We can ask for economic equality and security, including child care, affordable and safe housing, affordable transit, income security.

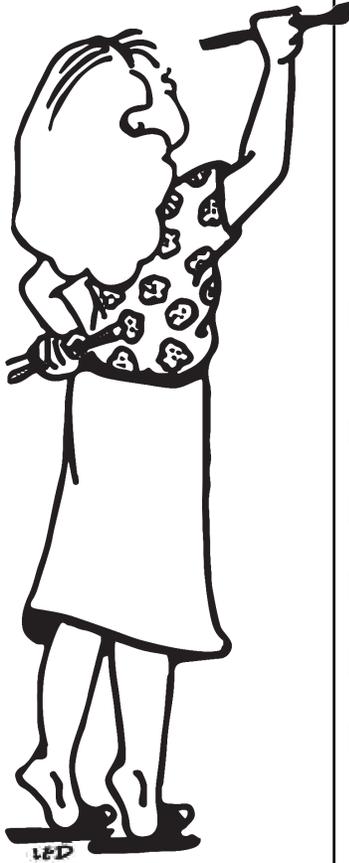
We need real measures to better measure the quality of life and wellbeing for everyone.

There are success stories of people in Ottawa speaking up and being heard by City staff and politicians. And, this resulted in real change. We can build on these experiences and share with our communities what we've learned.

Together we can create an inclusive city for everyone.

We have both a right and responsibility to do so.

Ways to Make Your Views Known



- Informing the Mayor and Councillors**
 - Call, e-mail, tweet or write them
 - Set up a meeting with them
 - Thank the Mayor and/or your Councillor when they vote in your favour
 - Invite a Councillor to your events
 - Invite a Councillor to your community or organization
- Making a deputation to a Standing Committee or City Board**
- Talking with City staff**
- Participating in Public Consultations**
- Organizing a vigil or rally at City Hall**
- Circulating a petition**
- Making the news**
 - Email the editor
 - Tweet to the media
 - Arrange an interview with the media
- Participating in municipal elections**
 - Ask a question at a candidate's meeting
 - Organize a candidate's meeting.
 - Support a Councillor running for office.
- Run for office, become the Mayor or a councillor!**

Informing City Council in 8 Easy Steps!

We all exercise influence every day – in our workplace, in our families, and with our friends! We may not use that word, but we use the same skills. With persuasion and persistence, we try to help others see our point of view.

Yet many of us have fears about influencing politicians – afraid we can't express ourselves well enough, especially with someone we think knows more than us.

With a little experience you will find that politicians are just ordinary people. They are eager to hear from, and be educated by, constituents like you. Remember, there is no one more important to them than people like you (their constituents) who can vote for them in the next election. The Mayor is elected city wide and accountable to every Ottawa resident. You are his or her constituent.

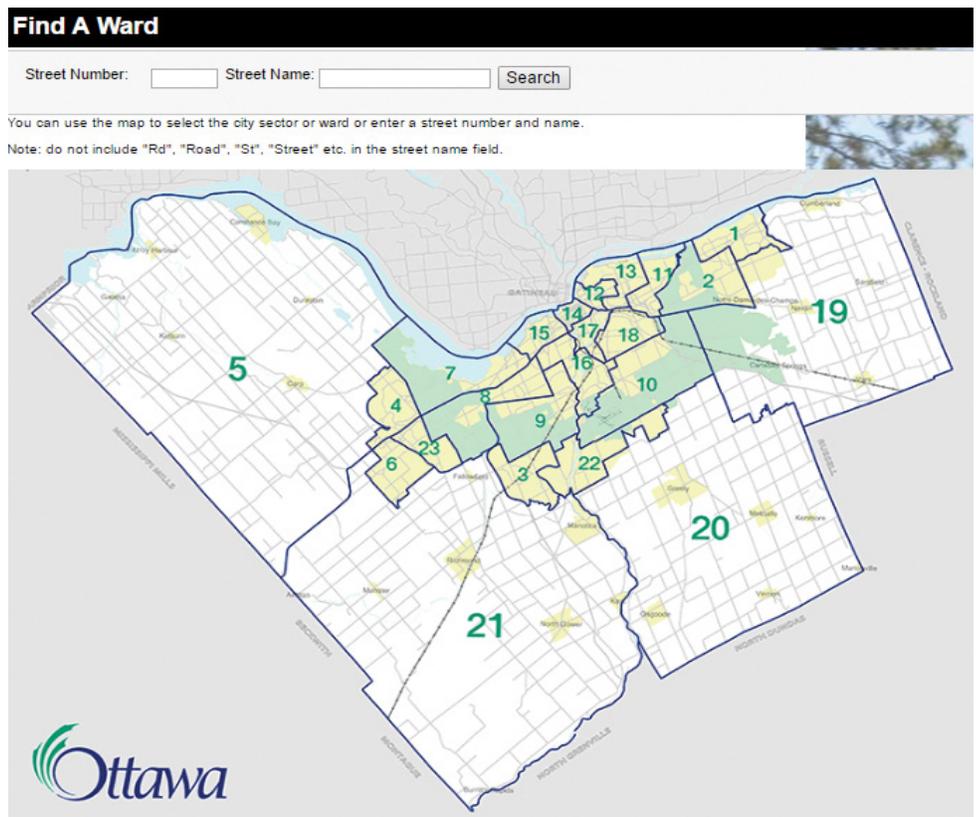
Eight easy steps to organize a meeting with a member of City Council.

Step One: Find Your Ward and Councillor

First, go to the [ward map](#) and type in your street number and name.

Then, [find your Councillor's contact information](#).

See contact information of Mayor and City Councillors in Appendix C.



Step Two: Put Your Team Together

Ask members of your community, partners, board members and/or community agency staff to go with you. The ideal number of people to attend is from two to five. This will show the politician that your community is concerned while not overwhelming her or him. Ensure that at least one member of your team is a constituent from the ward of the councillor you are meeting with. Councillors pay care more when a voter from their ward is present!



ASW

Step Three: Prepare Your Message

The content of the meeting should be planned in advance.

- Identify the key messages you wish to convey.
 - What is the issue?
 - Who does it affect?
 - How does it affect your community?
 - What is your specific ASK (what you want them to do)?
 - What would it take to fix the issue?
- Research some key facts or figures that can support your argument.
- Keep in mind that you are likely to be asked questions about cost in relates to your ASK. What will it cost to fix the issue? You don't need to have detail on the costs, but you will want to consider how to talk about the benefits of fixing your issue. One way is to stress how it will reduce costs for the City in the long run, as a particular social problem will be avoided (i.e. providing affordable recreation for youth, reduces police costs of responding to youth crime).
- Put your ideas in your own words, back up your ideas with your own experiences, examples and a few facts.

Step Four: Contact the Mayor's or a Councillor's Office to Book a Meeting

- Call or email to book a meeting.
- Be prepared to tell them the names, and affiliations of your team members and a couple of points you want to address. Put your request for a meeting in writing.
- Follow up with a reminder.

Step Five: Organize Your Meeting

The meeting with the Mayor or a Councillor should be organized and informative. Everyone should try to contribute to the meeting. Here are some tips:

- Select someone to be the main spokesperson. That person will introduce everyone and start the talking.
- Plan and rehearse what you plan to say during the meeting. Provide each team member with a role: lead speaker, person who speaks from their own experience, constituent, and note taker and/or observer. Agree who will speak when.
- Prepare materials to take to the meeting. Using facts or background information is important to help make your point. Make copies for each participant (including the Mayor and/or councillor and their assistant).
- On the day of the meeting, meet before the meeting to help each other to prepare.

Materials to take with you include:

- A profile of the group/groups your team represents.
- An agenda or list of topics to be covered.
- Any background information on the issue that you feel the politician should have (this is your opportunity to “educate” the Mayor and/or councillor about your issue!)
- Letters from other members in your community who support your efforts but are unable to attend.



Step Six: Meet with Mayor/Your Councillor

- **Remember you're the expert:** Though feeling nervous is natural, you have every reason to feel confident. The Mayor and councillors rely on members of different communities to inform them about issues. You will likely know far more about the issues in your community than they do.
- **Getting started:** Introduce yourself and your team and thank the Mayor/Councillor for meeting with you. Make sure they know that you represent the voices of others in your community and that you will go back and talk to your community about the meeting. Politicians are affected by a direct show of community support.

- **Deliver your message**

- **Explain your issue:** Describe who is impacted by the issue, how it affects the Mayor and/or councillor, what you are asking of the Mayor and/or councillor, and what is needed to address the issue. After you have made your points, answer questions from the Mayor and/or councillor and make sure to ask him/her how they would be prepared to help.
- **Your ASK:** Ask the Mayor and/or councillor what he or she is willing to do. Write down what they have said they will do.
- If you don't have the answer to a question, tell them you will get back to them with the information right away and expect them to do the same thing! Write down any steps you promise to take.
- **Closing:** Be sure to thank the Mayor and/or councillor for their time. Read out what each of you promised to do after the meeting (i.e. send answers to any unanswered questions, send more information, talk to neighbours, family, friends and colleagues, etc.).

Step Seven: Send a Thank-you Message

In your message, remind the councillor and/or Mayor of what they agreed to do. State when you will get in touch again. It is a great idea to keep in touch with the politicians. One idea is to send him or her an invitation to visit your agency or community. Start building a valuable relationship with your elected representative!

Step Eight: Record Your Experience

Once you have met with the Mayor/Councillor fill out the Report Form (see Appendix D). This is a good way for you to document the meeting, keep the Mayor and/or councillor accountable, and tell others from your group or agency about the meeting results.



Engaging People to Contact the City

The more members of council hear from people, the more they will know about your community's concerns. You can make phone calls, write letters and use social media. Think about who might join you in these actions. Who are your supporters and potential supporters?

Make it Easy to Take Action

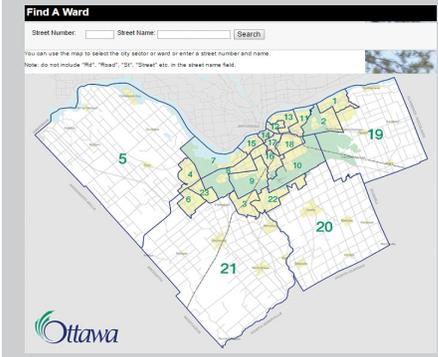
Provide anyone who wants to help with:

- A sample message.
- Contact information: name of the Mayor and/or councillor(s), phone, tweet, fax, e-mail, mailing address (Appendix C).

Phone Calls

If the Mayor and/or councillors get 10 messages or calls on an issue, they sit up and take notice, so imagine if they got 100! If a person prefers to not talk directly to the Mayor and/or councillor, they can simply leave a message by calling before or after office hours.

In one case, Somali women with limited English wanted to ask the Mayor and their councillors to support the Somali Women's Support Line (a service for women with limited English). They just left their messages in Somali.



Many people don't know the name of their Councillor. Help them to identify their ward and Councillor [online](#).

E-Mail and Letter Writing

- Provide a sample letter to help people write their own letter. State the problem, the impact on your community, and what you want the Mayor and/or councillor to do.
- Ask them to get back to you.
- Avoid everyone sending the sample letter. It's best if everyone uses some of their own words.
- It can be short and to the point.

A Twitter Campaign

- All members of Council (Mayor and 23 Councillors) now can be reached by Twitter. [Follow](#) the Mayor and/or councillors on Twitter to see the issues they are talking about. Respond to their tweets and write your own tweets to express concerns with issues. Make sure to use their handle in the tweet (their @ names) if you want them to see your tweet.
- Follow the media on Twitter. Respond or retweet using the Mayor and/or councillor's handle so they will see conversations and take note that it needs their attention.

Contact the media

See Part 2: Getting your message out

PRESENTING TO A COMMITTEE OR BOARD

What is a Deputation?

A deputation is a written or verbal presentation that residents, community groups or any interested party can present to City Council's Standing Committees or Boards. Presentations are five minutes and must be about a topic that is on the agenda. The agenda and staff reports for each meeting are posted the Friday before the date of the Committee or Board meeting.

Why Does the City do This?

Deputations allow Council members to listen to the people who elected them. In this way, city governments demonstrate they are open and accessible to the views of its citizens.

Why Make a Deputation?

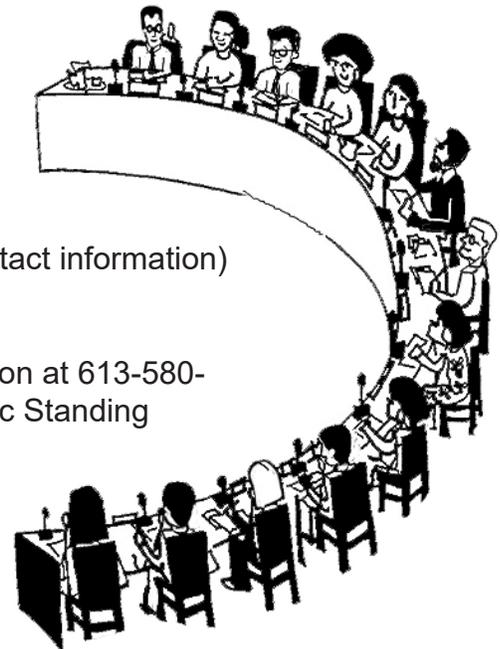
Making a deputation is a great way to educate members of City Council about your issue and ask for change. Media coverage can help members of council feel pressure to make a positive change. You get your point of view on public record. And, it's one way of exercising your rights as a citizen and assuming responsibility for creating a city for all. As a resident, you can help to ensure that the diverse voices in our city are heard.

Arranging to Present

[Check the City website](#) to know when the committee to whom you want to present is scheduled. Click on "City Hall", and then "Your City Government" and "Council, committee and board agendas and minutes

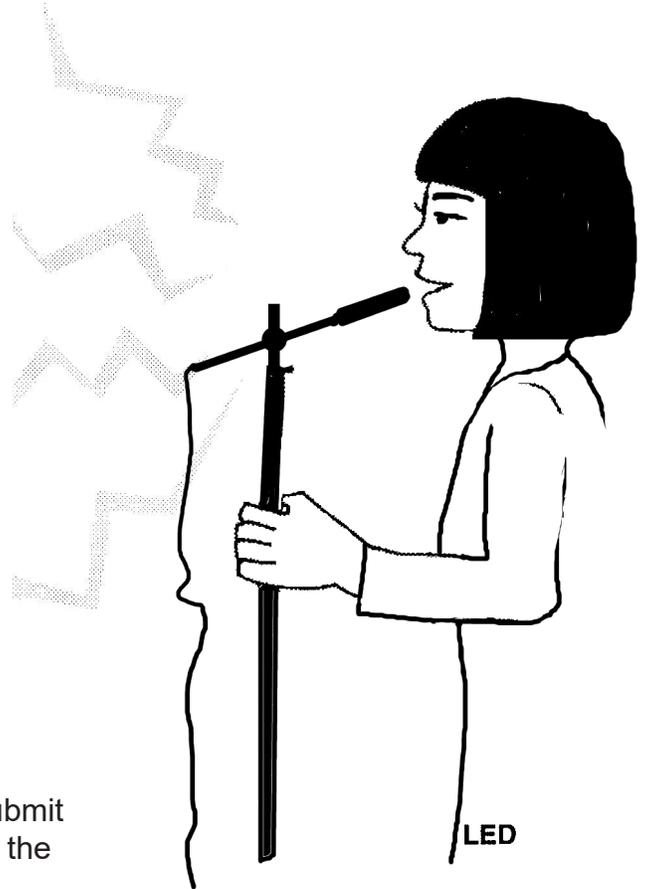
[Contact a Committee Coordinator](#) (see Appendix C for their contact information) prior to the meeting to register for your deputation.

You can also register by calling City of Ottawa general information at 613-580-2424. They will put you in touch with the coordinator of a specific Standing Committee.



Find Out When to Present the Deputation:

- Deputations are usually heard at the beginning of each agenda item of the committee meeting. The order of items on the agenda may shift, so be prepared to wait. Some meetings are long.
- You can also ask a Committee Coordinator (see Appendix C) when to present the deputation.
- Get an estimated time for when you will be presenting your deputation. You may do this by asking the Committee Coordinator. Or, check the City website where Standing Committee agendas are posted on the Friday preceding the committee meeting. You can estimate when you may speak based on your order on the agenda.
- It is best to make arrangements at home or work so you can be there longer, if possible. Who will look after the kids? If you are working with an organization, ask them if they can help with childcare costs. There is nothing worse than having to leave to meet the kids at the bus before you've had a chance to present.
- Arrange for someone to read your statement on your behalf in case you need to leave before your turn.
- You may want to bring a lunch or money to buy one just in case you are still there when the Committee breaks for lunch.



What if I Can't Present in Person?

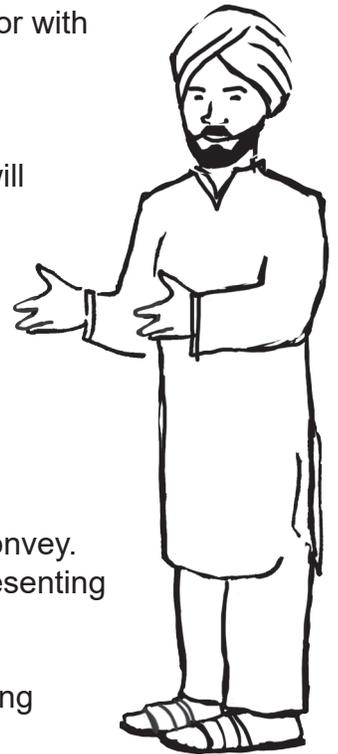
Another person can present in your place, or you can submit a written deputation that will be included in the record of the meeting.

Preparing Your Deputation

- Decide who is best to give the deputation from your group or organization.
 - Usually the members of Council want to hear from a constituent (resident, user of a service or member of an organization) but sometimes hearing from the chair or executive director of an organization is fine too.
 - If you are a staff member at an agency it is helpful to have a community member, client or resident speak as well because lived stories are powerful.

Write out what you want to say – see “The Deputation – What to Cover” for a sample structure to guide you and Appendix E for a sample deputation.

- Make your deputation as personal as possible. Explain how the proposed cuts or changes will affect you, your family and your community.
- If you use a service that is at risk of closing, explain how that service has helped you, and how you would suffer if the service closed.
- Deputations that use statistics are good. Use a few statistics to help make a point. Be prepared to back up the statistic if asked by a Councillor.
- Practice reading or saying your deputation out loud beforehand. You have only 5 minutes to speak and will be told when your time is over. If you have more than two people speaking, you can share this time or you can request two back-to-back spots. Time your deputation it to be sure you are under the time limit! If you are close to the time, you will feel the pressure to rush. Better to keep it short.
- If you plan to speak in French, [inform the coordinator](#) (see Appendix C) when you register so she or he can arrange translation, or you may bring your own translator with you. If you want to speak in a 3rd language, bring your own translator with you.
- Include translation time in your five minute deputation.
- Anticipate some questions you may be asked and prepare answers.
- Send the coordinator your deputation ahead of time so that councillors will have it on their computer screen as you present.
- Invite others to go with you to show wider community support and to be a support to you. Sometimes, a few people will go up to the table to sit beside or stand behind the person presenting the deputation.
- Be creative! Present a Powerpoint, a visual, or a song to emphasize your point.



On the Day of Your Deputation

- When thinking about what to wear, consider the message you want to convey. A neat appearance that is representative of the community you are representing is most effective.
- Be yourself. Know what you have to say is important.
- If there isn't an assigned time, you should arrive by 9:30 am at the meeting room. Be prepared that there may be a lengthy wait.
- When you arrive in the room you should be able to get a copy of the "Deputation List". This is the list of all of the scheduled deputations that day. If this information isn't on one of the side tables you can ask the Committee Coordinator. This list will tell you the order of the speakers and what issues they are there to speak on.
- Be assertive but not aggressive. Councillors want to hear what you have to say. If you are nervous, that's ok as they will know that you are real.
- Be sure to keep to your time limit. The chair will tell you when your time is up.
- Speak slowly and into the microphone so you can be understood.

Tips for Being Most Effective

- If you are willing to help City Council lobby the provincial or federal governments to get more money for cities and municipalities let them know that! And then follow-up by writing a letter to your member of provincial parliament and member of parliament!
- Call your local councillor and tell them you will be making a deputation. Ask them to come to the meeting room to hear you.
- Make sure you send your local Councillor a copy of your deputation.
- Follow up and ask your local Councillor whether they support your position.

Adapted from materials produced by the Ontario Coalition for Better Childcare

The Deputation – What To Cover

- Be sure to double-space your text, use a clear and easy-to-read font, and number your pages.
- Date and Committee Name (for tracking purposes)
- Address the Committee and thank the committee for allowing you to come before them.

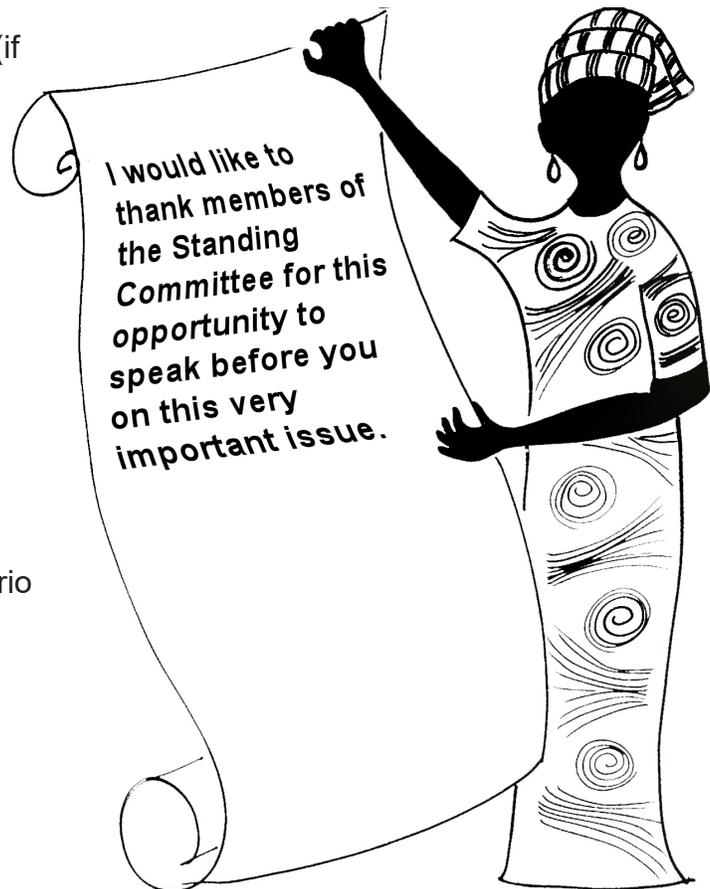
For example: “Good afternoon madam chair. Before I start I would like to thank you for this opportunity to address the Committee”

OR

“I would like to thank members of the Standing Committee for this opportunity to speak before you on this very important issue”

- Introduce yourself and your organization (if applicable) – keep it brief.
- Clearly state the issue you are addressing.
- Tell them why it is important.
- Give examples of the problem and/or solution.
- Tell them what you want them to do and when.
- Tell them again, why it is important.
- Thank them and tell them you will be watching and waiting!
- And have fun!

Adapted from materials produced by the Ontario Coalition for Better Childcare



Getting the Facts to Support Your Message

Whether you are preparing to meet with a councillor, preparing a deputation or talking to the media, you will want to collect some information. This means doing research. Research is not something only done by university researchers; it can be done by all of us. It basically means asking ourselves what information will show that there is a problem, influence people to make a positive change, and then figuring out where to get that information.

Remember that city councillors will probably know less than you do about the issue in your community. This is your chance to educate them. Speak from your experience, but back it up with some facts or statistics.

You might want some information to show:

- The history of the problem.
- The effect the problem has on the community.
- How your proposed solution will address the problem.
- How it relates to the changing population in Ottawa.

Where you might get the information:

- Contact community organizations working on the issue
- Request information on population trends from the Ottawa Social Planning Council.
- Review information from the Ottawa Neighbourhood Study.
- Check out reports and minutes on the [City of Ottawa website](#).
- Articles in the newspaper.
- Do a community survey.
- See what other cities have done to address a similar challenge.
- Check out relevant websites on your issue.



Talking To City Staff

City staff manage the operations of the city and present reports to Council to receive direction. They follow the strategic plan as set by Council for each term of Council. In consulting with the public, they are to follow the principles of the City's [Public Engagement Strategy](#) and apply the [Equity and Inclusion Lens](#) to all aspects of their work.

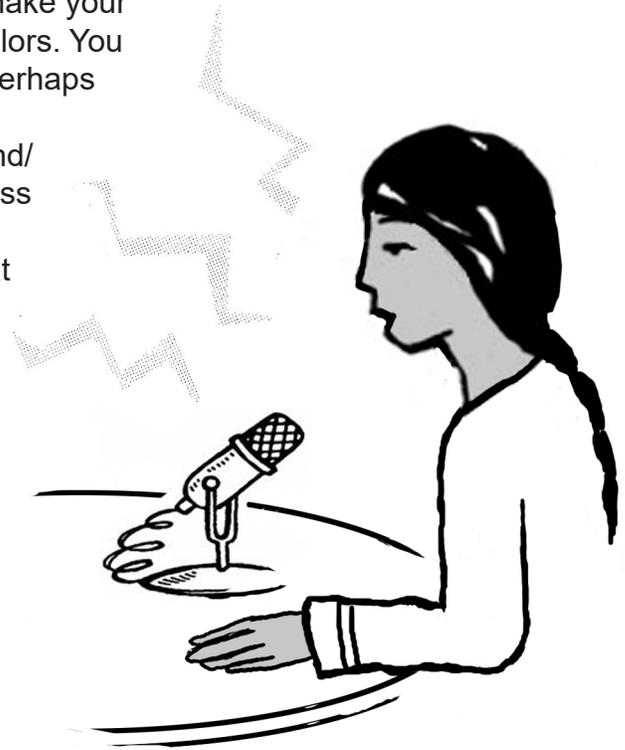
City staff working on a specific issue or report for Council can be contacted to provide information.

It is important to know that you can:

- Organize a vigil or protest outside of City Hall to make your views known to staff and the Mayor and/or councillors. You may invite supportive councillors to join you and perhaps speak on the issue.
- Attend City Council meetings wearing a symbol and/or color to make your group visible. Inform the press and the Mayor and/or councillors of your symbol.
- Tweet to Council during the meeting on issues that are being discussed

However, you are not allowed to:

- Walk into City Hall with a protest sign
- Make loud noises at City Council meetings
- Present a deputation at City Council meetings





2 GETTING YOUR MESSAGE OUT

Keys resources used to prepare this section are Media Relations Guide, prepared for The Regional Coordinating Committee to End Violence Against Women, by Shari Graydon, November 2004 and Alternative/Community Media Relations Workshop, Public Service Alliance of Canada, February 2007.

DEVELOP YOUR PLAN

1. Set your goals: What do we want to change?

2. Identify the target audience: Who needs to take action for the change to happen?

3. Develop key messages: What information do people need to get involved?

4. Choose the best communication method(s) to reach the target audiences.

5. Communicate!

6. Motivate people to take action!



Set Your Goals: What Do You ASK City Council to Change?

There are many ways we can communicate and get our message out—from media to Facebook to flyers. Before we start communicating, we need to know WHY we are communicating. What change do we want to happen?

Ask yourself: What will be different as a result of communicating? For example, do you want:

- Ottawa City Council to invite resident input in a decision?
- More funding for a program?
- A low-income transit pass?
- Volunteers for an event?
- Low-income residents to attend a workshop?
- Diverse residents to vote in a municipal, provincial or federal election?
- City Council to pass a motion?
- Staff to invite residents' input on issues?

Write down what you want to be different. Be clear on the change that you want to happen when you communicate.

Identify Target Audience: Who Needs to Take Action for the Change to Happen?

Simply making people “aware” of an issue does not result in change. You need to identify who can make change happen (residents, community agencies, the Mayor or councillors). Then identify WHAT action people need to take. The actions taken by residents could be different than the actions taken by the Mayor or Councillors. Examples of actions people can take include:

Residents and community agencies:

- Make a deputation
- Contact their Councillor to discuss the issue
- Attend a public meeting or workshop
- Sign a petition.

Mayor or Councillor:

- Make a motion
- Vote on an issue
- Change a policy
- Consult with residents

Remember: Simply making those people “aware” of an issue does not result in change. Ask for the change you want to happen.



Develop Key Messages: What Information Help People Act?

Think about the issue and the change you want. What are the top 3-4 points that people need to know to take action? Keep in mind that the people you want to take action may not know as much about the issue as you know. This includes members of City Council.

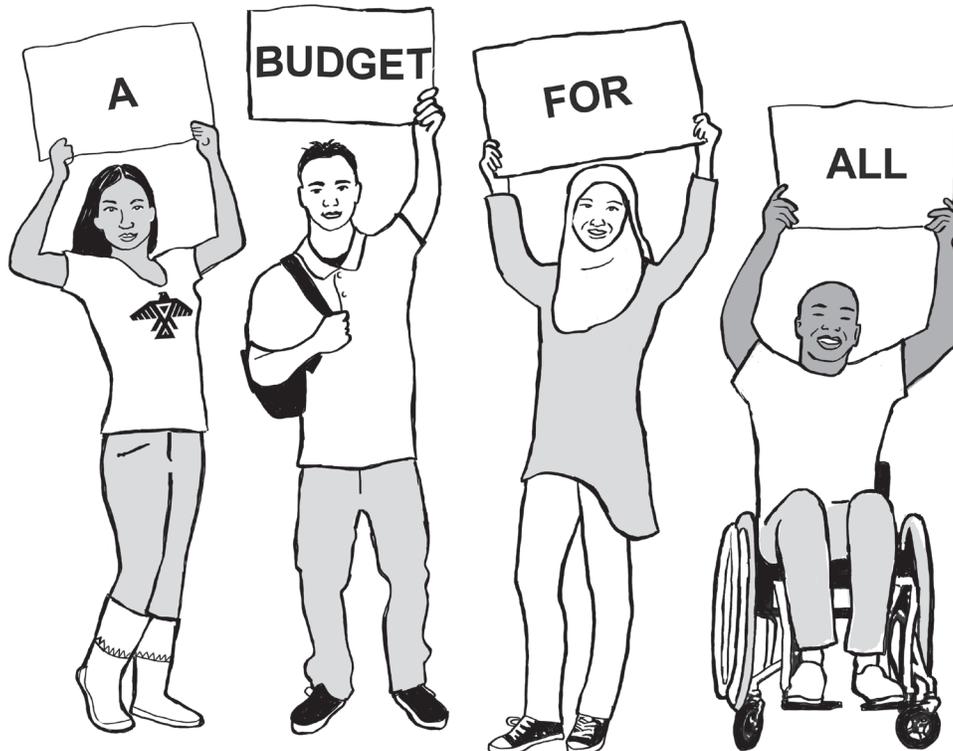
If you had just 20 seconds to explain the issue to someone in an elevator, what would you say? Make sure that one of the 3-4 points is the action that you want people to take.

Different people or groups may need different information. Consider if you would talk about this issue differently to a councillor than to an Ottawa resident. Maybe you are asking different people or groups to take different actions. For example, you may ask:

- An Ottawa resident to call their city councillor and ask for more funding for a program.
- A city councillor to vote for the funding at a meeting.

Write down the 3-4 more important points. These are your key messages. Here are some points to get you started.

- I believe that...
- This matters to me because (your issue)
- I am asking you to (what you want that person to take)
- I will (what you are going to do).



Choose the Best Communication Methods

There are many ways to communicate. Think about WHOM you want to take action. Now ask yourself: How do they want to receive information? For example, it may work best to reach a city councillor through a letter, email, phone call, meeting or Twitter. But, the best way to reach a resident in your community could be through word of mouth, a flyer in their mailbox, poster at the community house, or your community's Facebook page.

There are many communication methods to consider, including:

- Word of mouth
- Email
- Media
- Twitter
- Posters
- Email
- Facebook
- Flyers
- Newsletters

Think about the communication method(s) that are best to reach the people who you want to take action. We will cover some of these methods in the following pages.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Twitter

Twitter can be a very useful tool. Twitter is especially helpful for reaching members of City Council and media. A few ways to use Twitter are as follows.

- [Sign up](#) for Twitter if you don't have an account, it is simple and easy!
- Follow media who cover City Hall issues. Journalists attending a committee, commission or Council meeting will often live tweet what's being said, Council member votes, etc.
- Reply to media and City Councillor tweets with your comments, concerns and praise. Correct misinformation. Open a dialogue.
- Re-tweeting can show agreement, but it does not add anything new to a conversation. Don't just hit the re-tweet button. If you agree with a tweet and want to re-tweet, use the Quote Tweet option so you can add your opinion or experience, or more information to the conversation.
- When you want to bring an issue to the attention of the Mayor, your Councillor, or a journalist, be sure to use their handle (with the @ symbol) in your tweet.



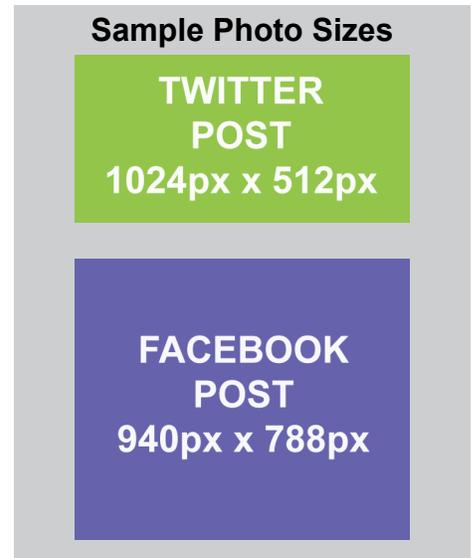
- Use the #ottnews and/or #ottcity hashtags.
 - There are 140 characters in a tweet, so use those valuable characters on hashtags that people are following (e.g. #ottawa and #ottnews)
 - Hashtags are easily successful at special events and conferences, when people are motivated to use (and check!) the hashtag for a few hours or days.
 - Creating a new hashtag that becomes widely used and followed for a campaign requires a lot of work. It is often best to use an existing hashtag.

Facebook Page

A Facebook Page is different than a person’s personal Facebook profile. A personal profile is almost always set-up to be private and requires that someone send you a “friend request” to see your posts. A Page is public and anyone can go to the Page and “Like” it.

Successful Facebook posts are:

- **Short:** Posts between 100 and 250 characters get about 60% more likes, comments and shares. People will not click the Read More link.
- **Visual:** Pictures, graphics and videos get more engagement. Tips: make simple graphics specifically sized for Facebook easily by using www.canva.com.
- **Directed at an outcome:** Encourage people to take action, for example, to call their City Councillor, attend an event, or talk to their neighbours about an issue.
- **Focused and on-topic with the current strategy:** For example, MVC is currently focused on the City of Ottawa budget and concerns around reductions to City services, especially cuts that could impact people living with low income. This includes the impact the City budget could have on transportation, food, employment, and more.
- **Directed to a target audience:** MVC keeps low-income Ottawa residents and potential allies (e.g. middle-class residents and community partners) informed. For example, informed about opportunities to get engaged with the budget process. MVC is helping residents understand the City Hall processes and who is involved.
- **Original:** Post content that followers won’t see anywhere else. For example, behind the scenes photos of participants engaged in events, at meetings, learning about City Hall, and more. MVC and the Coalition have a unique perspective. It is less interesting to share posts from news sources (e.g. CBC, CTV) that people can see elsewhere.



- **Descriptive:**
 - Only 4% of people click links in a post, so the post description must provide the information that someone needs to understand.
 - Give context in each post description. Remember that the reader may not have as much knowledge as the person creating the post.
 - Clearly explain the post so that a person who does not have any knowledge of the event, link or picture will understand and can take action.
 - Answer the questions who, what, when, where, and why.
- **Diverse:** Write posts in multiple languages, including the top languages spoken in Ottawa: English, French, Arabic, Chinese, Spanish, Italian, Mandarin, German, Portuguese, Cantonese, Somali and Persian (Farsi).
- **Special:** post only when a post meets the criteria in this list. Is it better to have just one post every few days that gets responses than six posts per day that don't get any response.

Not all of a Page's followers see all posts. The high (or low) interaction of a Page's followers matters because the Facebook algorithm (called EdgeRank) detects how many followers like, comment or share each post. The more (or less) a person engages with a Page's posts, the more (or less) likely Facebook will display future Page posts in their feed. As a result, they are more (or less) likely to support your Page's goals (e.g. volunteer, call a City Councillor, etc.).

Twitter and Facebook Content

Simply said, 'content' is the information you post to your website, your blog, social media, etc. Content can be pictures, text, video, and more.

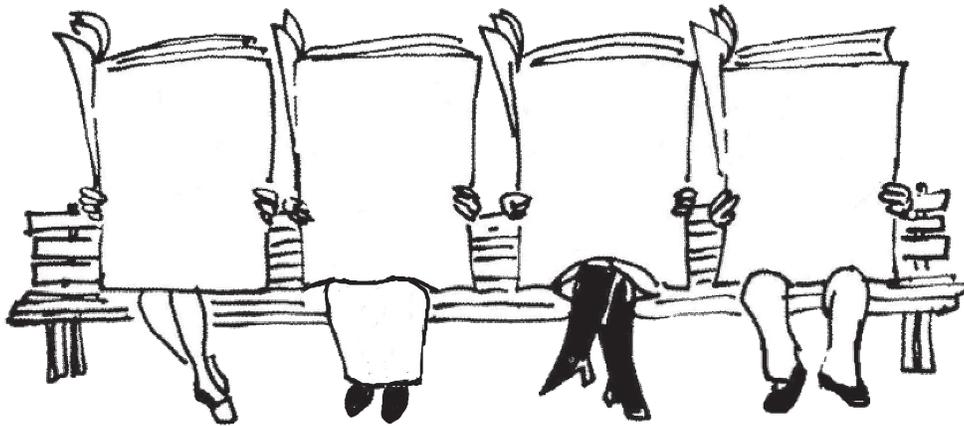
Create different content for Facebook than for Twitter. Twitter is limited to 140 characters and has its own style for hashtags and handles. Facebook allows for longer text. Plus, photos are sized differently for Facebook (940px x 788px) than for Twitter (1024px x 512px). The biggest and most noticeable problem that happens when the same photo is used on Facebook and Twitter is that people's heads don't appear in the Twitter picture. Use a free site like www.canva.com to easily create Facebook- or Twitter-sized graphics with text.

MAINSTREAM MEDIA

Journalists are people like us. They live and work in our communities. Media cover issues affecting Ottawa residents. Journalists are Ottawa residents too. Many media outlets (e.g. Ottawa Sun, CBC, Le Droit, Metro Ottawa) send a journalist to cover each City of Ottawa committee, commission and council meeting. Journalists also do stories about community meetings and events. They want to know what residents care about.

When a journalist reports on an issue, their story will be read, heard and/or viewed by possibly hundreds of thousands of Ottawa residents. A media story can let people know about an issue and encourage more people to take action and to ask for change.

View journalists as people who have a lot in common with us. Journalists need us to help them tell their stories.



How does a media interview happen?

A media interview can happen different ways. You could get in touch with the media, or the media can get in touch with you. The media might also get in touch with someone else, like a local agency that thinks that you would be a good person to talk about an issue.

Contacting media with your story idea

If you call a journalist to tell your story idea, then you are “pitching” to the journalist. There are journalists that cover local issues. Some journalists specialize in politics, including city hall. Check the newspaper or on-line to see if a journalist has previously covered the issue that you want to talk about. There are many ways to contact journalists.

Here are a few ideas:

- Phone the media outlet’s newsroom and ask to speak to the journalist.
- If you are at City Hall during a committee, commission or council meeting, you can follow the journalists who are covering the event. Respond to their tweets with your thoughts and with new information that you can add to the conversation. Speak to the media after a committee, commission or council meeting, to share your personal opinion.
- Send a letter to the editor in response to a story from their newspaper.

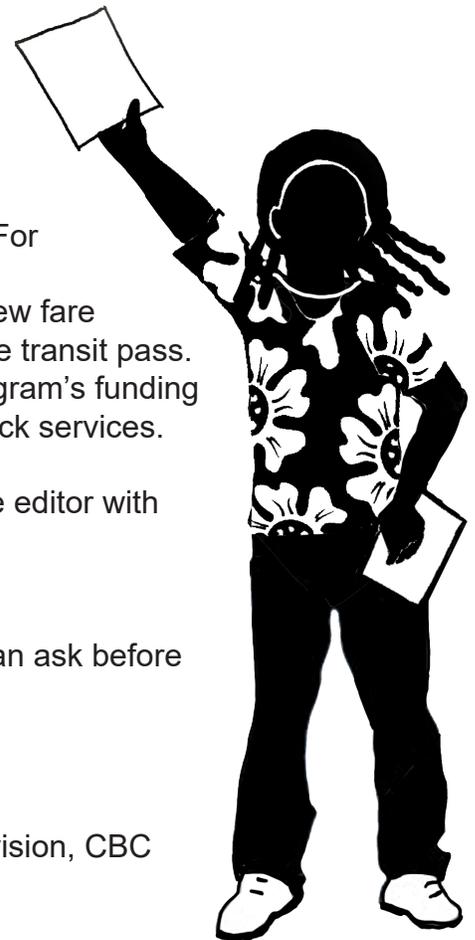
When you call a journalist with your story idea, there is key information they need to know. We call these The Five Ws: who, what, when, where and why. Write down answers to the following questions before contacting a journalist.

- Who:
 - Who is affected by what is happening?
 - Who is in charge of the changes?
 - Who is the expert?
 - Who is available for interview?
- What:
 - What is happening?
 - What makes this important to Ottawa residents?
- What are you asking for?
- When:
 - When is this happening? Time and date?
- Where:
 - Where is this happening?
- Why:
 - Why does this issue matter to Ottawa residents? How does it affect Ottawa residents?

What will be interesting to media?

Some times are better than others to contact a journalist with a story idea, or to share your opinion about an issue. Good times include:

- When an issue is new or something new happens with the issue. For example, a funding cut, a new schedule announcement, a waiting list gets longer.
- When an issue is being discussed at a City of Ottawa committee, commission or council meeting.
- When the same issue is happening in another Canadian city. For example, when another city gets a low-income transit pass.
- When there is a new report about the issue. For example, a new fare structure report or a report about the feasibility of a low-income transit pass.
- When there is an approaching deadline. For example, if a program's funding is about to run out and the program will have to close or cutback services.
- When there is a demonstration about the issue.
- When there is a story in the paper. You can write a letter to the editor with your response to the story.



If you are asked to give an interview

You may be asked to give an interview. There are questions you can ask before agreeing to give an interview.

These questions include:

- What is the name of the reporter?
- Which media outlet is she or he with? For example, CBC television, CBC radio, Ottawa Sun, CTV television, 1310 radio, etc.
- What date and time is the interview?
- How long is the interview? For example, is the interview three minutes or 30 minutes?
- Will the interview be live or be taped to be broadcast later?
- Will anyone else be interviewed at the same time as me?
- What exactly do they want to talk about? What questions will they ask me?

Preparing to Talk to the Media

What is Your Role?

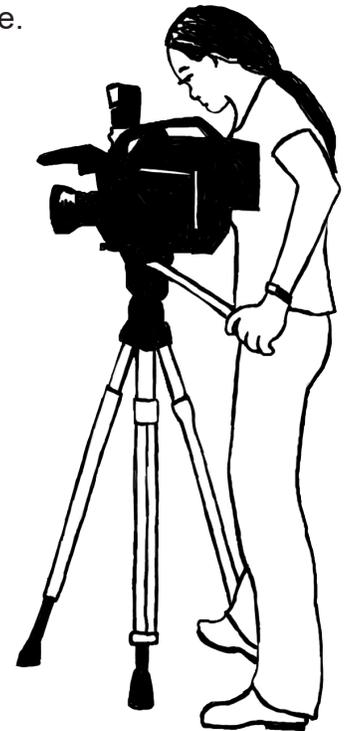
If you speak to the media, be clear whom you are representing. You can always speak to the media as a concerned resident. If you want to speak on behalf of a community group or organization (e.g. your community health centre), make sure first that it is your role or that you have their permission.

What Will You say in Media Interview?

If a journalist is interested in speaking with you, take time to prepare. You want your words to make a difference. You want people to take action after hearing or reading your words. A journalist might interview you for ten minutes, but that interview could be edited down to just a few seconds on TV or just a few lines in an article.

Refer back to “Develop Key Messages: What Information Help People Act?” on page 36.

- Ask yourself the: what, where, why, when of your story
 - WHO and WHAT is the story about?
 - WHEN is the event taking place? Or, when does this issue need to be resolved?
 - WHY is it a problem? Why does this matter to your community?
 - WHAT is needed to solve the problem? What action do you want people to take?
- Revise your message to make it short and clear. Use simple language.
 - Be prepared to give your message in a 10 – 20 second “sound bite”. “Sound bite” is media language for a short statement.
- Consider how to cover all your messages in the time available
- Practice saying your message so you can say it with ease.
- Consider your responses. Think what questions you might be asked and how you might answer them. What is the worst question they might ask? How can you best respond so as to reinforce your main message?



During the Interview:

- **Be yourself.**
- **Know you have something important to say. Your views matter!**
 - Take a deep breath before you begin. Speak calmly. Remember that you want the reporter's story to motivate people to take action.
- **Listen carefully.**
 - Make sure you understand the question. If you do not understand, ask the reporter to re-phrase it.
- **Not sure what you want to say? Take a moment.**
 - Ask the reporter to repeat or clarify a question while you think of how you will phrase your comment.
- **Avoid yes/no answers.**
 - Answer questions using full sentences. Provide examples and statistics if you know any. The reporter wants to hear what you have to say.
- **Keep on your message.**
 - Use every question as an opportunity to re-state your main message in different ways.
- **Choose the information you will share.**
 - You do not have to answer all the questions a reporter might ask. If the reporter asks a question that is too personal about your story, you do not have to answer. You can say, "I do not feel this is an important part of the story."
- **If you don't know the answer, don't make it up.**
 - If the reporter asks a question to which you don't know the answer, then tell them. Promise the reporter you will get back to them. Then make sure you do get back to them before their deadline.
- **Expect repetitive questions.**
 - It is normal for the journalist to ask you the same question more than once. This gives you a chance to give a shorter answer, or a more clear answer than the first time.
- **Chose your clothes carefully.**
 - A neat appearance is best when you are representing your community. Do not wear jewellery that will distract a viewer or jingle into a microphone. Don't chew gum. Remove sunglasses and hats. If you normally wear make-up, apply more than usual. Do not wear plaid or patterns for a TV interview, because they do not show well on TV. If you have a symbol that conveys your message, like a scarf or button, be sure to make it visible.





After the Interview:

Following your interview, take a couple of minutes to evaluate your message delivery. Ask yourself, and ask others, who were present, if you were able to:

- Communicate your key messages. How many of the 3-4 messages were you able to include in your interview?
- Use a calm voice. Avoid responding with strong emotions
- Speak concisely, using short and clear phrases.
- Use simple language. Avoid jargon.
- Maintain eye contact with the journalist.
- Use a tone of voice and facial expressions that match the topic. For example, if you are concerned, then reflect that feeling in your voice tone and facial expression.

The Media Advisory

A media advisory is a brief notice sent to media outlets three days ahead of time to inform the media about an upcoming issue or event. The purpose of a media advisory is to invite members of the media to attend an event. The aim is to have the event, or the information released during the event, covered by the news media. A media advisory's job is to tell journalists the who, what, when, where, and why (Ws questions) and any additional key details.

Media advisories aren't meant for public eyes.

Key elements of a media advisory

- It should be brief and to the point. Less than one page or approximately 200 – 300 words.
- It should contain a headline detailing the most important information.
- It should include the “five Ws” mentioned above.
- Mention the exact time of any special photo-taking opportunities, or good chances to shoot video for television. Include the specific time(s) of any speeches or presentations.
- It should include contact information for someone willing to help reporters to get more information for their pieces, including helping the reporter at the event. You will usually provide a cell phone number.

Tip: If you are hosting an event, ensure it's at a time that is convenient for media. For example, it is difficult for a TV station to send a videographer between 3-7 pm when they are preparing to host the news, then on the air.

How to Send a Media Advisory

- Send a media advisory by email.
- Copy and paste the text into the email. This makes it easiest to read on a journalist's mobile device.
- Do not send the media advisory file (e.g. Word or PDF) as an attachment.

See Appendix F for a sample media advisory.

The Press Release

A press release is a brief document (no more than one page or 300 words) to bring an event or issue to their attention.

The purpose of a press release (sometimes called news release or media release) is to inspire a journalist to research the story further and/or conduct an interview to write a unique news story.

Remember that reporters, editors and producers are hungry for news, and depend on press releases to tip them off to new events and happenings.

Use an Active Headline to Grab the Reporter's Attention

The headline makes your release stand out. Keep it short, active and descriptive; in other words, use something like, "child care cuts mean huge job loss" instead of "city changes child care subsidy criteria".

Speak From Facts and Experience

Make a list of fact. Be accurate. Check your facts. But also speak from your own experience. Remember you know more than the reporter.

Put the Most Important Information at the Beginning

This is a tried and true rule of journalism. The reporter should be able to tell what the release is about from the first couple of sentences. In fact, chances are that's all they may read. So don't hide the good information. And remember the "5 Ws and the H": make sure your release provides answers to the Who, What, Where, When, Why and How.

Be Active and to the Point

Use language that will get the reader as excited about your news as you are. Use quotes from community members, high profile people or someone involved in the event/action. Quotes help tell your story. If your release is boring or unclear and full of descriptive words, the reporter may assume you will not be good to interview.



Talk to the Reader, Not Yourself

Give details of the news so the editor understands why it's important to her readers. Tell the story from the perspective of the community affected (people), not a specific agency.

Keep Jargon to the Minimum

Reporters are not as knowledgeable about the issue and your community as you. Make sure you are using clear and simple language, not jargon. Everyday words work best. Avoid acronyms. For example: say "early childhood educator" and not "ECE".

Include Complete Contact Information

Make sure the journalist can reach you. Include a contact name, name of group or organization, cell phone number and email address. Ensure your contact person is knowledgeable about your issue and the event. Include a short summary about your group or organization; who you are, what you do, how long you have been operating. Keep it short. Don't include your annual report!

Keep the Media Release Short

Maximum length should be one page and no more than 300 words.

Proofread

When you've finished your news release, remember to proofread it for errors. Ask someone else to look it over to catch errors you may not see.

When including names, be sure to use the full names of the person when first mentioned, then, after that, the initial of their first name with their last name. Be sure to spell names correctly.

Distribute your Release

Give reporters a "heads-up" by sending out, first a Media Advisory – with time date, location and contact information 3-days before your event and then a Press Release the evening before your event (Journalists pick-up their assignments in the morning). Follow up your media release with a phone call to each of the media outlets early the morning of the event to make sure they got your media release. Ask them if they will cover your event or issue.

Respond to Any Media Calls or Emails Requesting Further Information

See Appendix G for a sample press release.

Letters to the Editor

Local media is one of the most important advocacy tools at your disposal. Writing a letter to the editor is one of the easiest ways to get your message and call to action to Ottawa residents. A letter to the Editor is a short letter you write to the newspaper in response to news story that appeared in the paper. Your letter can offer praise, criticism and/or more information. The Letters to the Editor page is the second most read page of the newspaper! Politicians use it to gauge public opinion.

Follow these tips and you'll be able to make it work for your group/agency.:

- Keep it short (300 words is good, 150 is better and 50 is best).
- Focus on your strongest argument. Get across one strong point.
- Expect to be edited for length, grammar and to fit the paper's style.
- Send the letter right away after reading the article to which you're responding. Refer to a previously published article.
- Write while people are still talking about the issue.
- Keep it simple and clear.
- Localize the issue, be specific and brief. Length and format requirements vary from paper to paper.
- Be accurate. One mistake damages your credibility.
- Include your full name and phone number with the letter. Expect a call from the newspaper to confirm your identity.
- Instructions for submitting a letter to the editor are usually at the bottom of the page where they appear or on the paper's Web site.
- Follow up. If you have sent your letter to the editor and have not heard anything within a week, make a follow-up call to check on its status. Be aware that editors receive hundreds of letters and may not immediately respond to you.

See Appendix H for a sample letter to the editor.





APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT

Ontario Legislative Assembly		
PREMIER Leader of the Governing Party	GOVERNING PARTY Elected MPPs. Ministers / Cabinet Members	OPPOSITION PARTIES Elected MPPs

WE ELECT THEM, THEY ARE ACCOUNTABLE TO US

WHO ARE THEY?	HOW CAN THEY HELP US?
<p>(Members of Provincial Parliament) MPPs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – MPPs are elected to represent people who live in a riding. – Ontario has 107 ridings. – The Legislative Assembly of Ontario is made up of these 107 MPPs. – MPPs meet at Queens Park in Toronto to make decisions about provincial issues. – Each MPP has two offices: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Constituency office in their riding – Queens Park in Toronto 	<p>OUR MPP AND HIS/HER STAFF CAN:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Explain where we can go to get our concern addressed. – Put forward private members' bills to advance particular issues. – Use their position to gain media attention. <p>To raise our concerns:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Contact by phone, e-mail or letter. – Invite them to community events. – Request a meeting.
<p>MINISTERS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – The Premier appoints ministers. – Each minister directs one or more provincial departments. – Ministers form the cabinet. 	<p>A MINISTER CAN:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Address an issue in the departments for which he/she is responsible. <p>To raise our concerns:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Join with wider campaigns to have a strong voice.
<p>PREMIER</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Leader of the party with the most MPPs. – Head of Ontario government. – Selects members of Cabinet. 	<p>PREMIER CAN:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Provide leadership on issues that address our concerns. <p>To raise our concerns:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Join with wider campaigns to have a strong voice.

Credit: Creating the Change We Want - A Guide to Building Neighbourhood Capacity, Page 88

APPENDIX B: FEDERAL GOVERNMENT



WE ELECT THEM, THEY ARE ACCOUNTABLE TO US

WHO ARE THEY?	HOW CAN THEY HELP US?
Members of Parliament (MP's)	OUR MP AND HIS/HER STAFF CAN:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – MPs represent people who live in a geographic area, called a riding. – Canada has 308 ridings. – Parliament has 308 MPs. – MPs meet on Parliament Hill in Ottawa to make decisions about national issues. – Each MP has two offices: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Constituency office in their riding – At Parliament Hill 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Explain where we can go to get our concern addressed. – Put forward private members' bills to advance an issue. – Use their position to gain media attention for an issue. <div style="background-color: #eee; padding: 5px;">To raise our concerns:</div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Contact by phone, e-mail or letter. – Invite them to community events. – Request a meeting.
MINISTERS	A MINISTER CAN:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – The Prime Minister appoints Ministers from the MPs of the governing party. – Each Minister directs one or more government departments. – Ministers form the cabinet. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Address an issue in the departments for which they are responsible. <div style="background-color: #eee; padding: 5px;">To raise our concerns:</div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Join with wider campaigns to have a strong voice.
PRIME MINISTER	PRIME MINISTER CAN:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Leader of the party with the most MPs. – Head of the federal government. – Selects the Ministers who form the Cabinet. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Provide leadership on issues that address our concerns. <div style="background-color: #eee; padding: 5px;">To raise our concerns:</div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Join with wider campaigns to have a strong voice.

Credit: Creating the Change We Want - A Guide to Building Neighbourhood Capacity, Page 89

APPENDIX C: CONTACT INFORMATION

Ottawa City Council 2014-2018

Send mail to: City Hall, 110 Laurier Avenue W. Ottawa, Ontario K1P 1J1

City of Ottawa

Mayor Jim Watson
jimwatsonottawa.ca
Jim.Watson@ottawa.ca
(613) 580-2496
@jimwatsonottawa

Ward 6 Stittsville-Kanata West

Councillor Shad Qadri
shadqadri.com
Shad.Qadri@ottawa.ca
(613) 580-2476
@shadqadri

Ward 12 Rideau-Vanier

Councillor Mathieu Fleury
mathieufleury.ca
Mathieu.Fleury@ottawa.ca
(613) 580-2482
@mathieufleury

Ward 1 Orléans

Councillor Bob Monette
bobmonette.ca
Bob.Monette@ottawa.ca
(613) 580-2471
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Ward 7 Bay

Councillor Mark Taylor
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@go_taylor

Ward 13 Rideau-Rockcliffe

Councillor Tobi Nussbaum
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Ward 2 Innes

Councillor Jody Mitic
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Ward 8 College

Councillor Rick Chiarelli
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Ward 14 Somerset

Councillor Catherine McKenney
catherinemckenney.ca
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Ward 3 Barrhaven

Councillor Jan Harder
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Ward 9 Knoxdale-Merivale

Councillor Keith Egli
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ward9@ottawa.ca
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@KeithEgli

Ward 15 Kitchissippi

Councillor Jeff Leiper
KitchissippiWard.ca
Jeff.Leiper@ottawa.ca
(613) 580-2485
@jleiper

Ward 4 Kanata North

Councillor Marianne Wilkinson
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(613) 580-2474
@marianne4kanata

Ward 10 Gloucester-Southgate

Councillor Diane Deans
dianedeans.ca
Diane.Deans@ottawa.ca
(613) 580-2480
@dianedeans

Ward 16 River

Councillor Riley Brockington
RileyBrockington.ca
Riley.Brockington@ottawa.ca
(613) 580-2486
@riverwardriley

Ward 5 West Carleton-March

Councillor Eli El-Chantiry
eliel-chantiry.ca
Eli.El-Chantiry@ottawa.ca
(613) 580-2475
@Eli_ElChantiry

Ward 11 Beacon Hill-Cyrville

Councillor Tim Tierney
TimTierneyOttawa.ca
Tim.Tierney@ottawa.ca
(613) 580-2481
@timtierney

Ward 17 Capital

Councillor David Chernushenko
capitalward.ca
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@chernushenko

Ward 18 Alta Vista

Councillor Jean Cloutier
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 Jean.Cloutier@ottawa.ca
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 @jeancloutierott

Ward 19 Cumberland

Councillor Stephen Blais
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 Stephen.Blais@ottawa.ca
 (613) 580-2489
 @StephenBlais

Ward 20 Osgoode

Councillor George Darouze
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 George.Darouze@ottawa.ca
 (613) 580-2490
 @georgedarouze

Ward 21 Rideau-Goulbourn

Councillor Scott Moffatt
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 Scott.Moffatt@ottawa.ca
 (613) 580-2491
 @scottmoffatt21

Ward 22 Gloucester-South Nepean

Councillor Michael Qaqish
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 Michael.Qaqish@ottawa.ca
 (613) 580-2751
 @QaqishPolitico

Ward 23 - Kanata South

Councillor Allan Hubley
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 Allan.Hubley@ottawa.ca
 (613) 580-2752
 @AllanHubley_23

Standing Committees

If you would like to make a five-minute presentation, you must book your attendance in advance by contacting the relevant committee coordinator at the information phone numbers listed below.

Information is subject to change, check City website http://app05.ottawa.ca/sirepub/agendaminutes/index_en.aspx for most recent information).

Agriculture & Rural Affairs Committee (ARAC)

Marc Desjardins
 (613) 580-2424 ext 28821
 Marc.Desjardins@ottawa.ca

Audit Committee

Carole Legault
 (613) 580-2424 x28934
 CaroleA.Legault@ottawa.ca

Community and Protective Services Committee

Marc Desjardins
 (613) 580-2424 ext. 28821
 Marc.Desjardins@ottawa.ca

Environment Committee

Christopher Zwierzchowski
 (613) 580-2424 ext. 21359
 Christopher.Zwierzchowsk@ottawa.ca

Finance and Economic Development Committee (FEDCO)

Carole Legault
 (613) 580-2424 x28934
 CaroleA.Legault@ottawa.ca

Planning Committee

Melody Duffenais
 (613) 580-2424 x20113
 Melody.Duffenais@ottawa.ca

Transit Commission

Joël Monfils
 (613) 580-2424 x26837
 Joel.Monfils@ottawa.ca

Transportation Committee

Rosemary Nelson
 (613) 580-2424 ext. 21624
 Rosemary.Nelson@ottawa.ca

APPENDIX D: MAYOR/COUNCILLOR MEETING REPORT FORM

Use this form to record the results of your meeting with the elected official. If you fill it out right away, it will help you to remember the details of what was said and the follow-up you will want to do.

1. Name of Councillor:

2. Meeting Date and Time:

3. Who was in attendance (People/Organizations/Positons):

4. Goal of Meeting:

5. The ASK: What did we ASK the Councillor to do?

6. Statistics or Stories you presented to make your case.

7. Statements/Commitments the Councillor made:

8. What questions did the Councillor ask of us?

9. Commitments we made:

10. Follow-up Needed:

11. Other useful information:

APPENDIX E: SAMPLE DEPUTATION



Transit Commission
May 9, 2016
City For All Women Initiative
(CAWI)

Naheed Khan and Rachel Manson

Good morning Chair Blais and Commissioners. My name is Rachel Manson and this is my colleague Naheed Khan. We are here today to speak, on behalf of the City For All Women Initiative or CAWI, to the Low-Income Transit Pass and the benefits that establishing such a pass would mean for our city. We also support the abolition of the Para Transpo top-up charge, which is directly related to transit affordability for low-income persons with disabilities.

You are all aware of the commitment that OC Transpo has made to apply the City of Ottawa Equity and Inclusion Lens to all its services to make sure that no-one is excluded from such an important and basic service as public transit. We and others have spoken in previous deputations about the research that shows a relationship between affordable public transit and both labour force participation and overall increased economic development. All of us are aware of the direct relationship between higher transit fares and decreased transit use.

I would like to speak briefly about my own situation and the impact that transit fares have on my family. I am a single parent, living in Kanata who is studying full-time towards a BSW while also working part-time. I would definitely qualify for a low-income transit pass were one available. I do have a car because I have family living in rural Ottawa, where public transit is virtually non-existent. But I would use transit to get to school and work downtown, were it more affordable. My children have used transit to attend school for many years, through public, high school and university and these costs have always taken up a significant portion of my household budget.

Ten Ontario cities have already recognized the need for some form of Low Income Transit Pass. Meanwhile, Ottawa maintains some of the highest transit fares in our country. A Low Income Transit Pass would facilitate greater social and economic participation of low-income individuals and families in our city. This, in turn, can only help us achieve our goal of a healthy and prosperous city overall. My name is Naheed Khan and I depend upon public transit to get where I need to go in this city. I am a single mother of 4 and am on ODSP. I have also been on the waiting list for social housing for 6 years. While my full rent is \$1300 per month, my ODSP rent allowance is only \$806. I make up the difference of almost \$500 from my basic needs pay. While I am eligible for a Community Pass, I must also buy 3 bus passes every month for my children.

Two of my children have taken out student loans to finish their post-secondary education. They work part-time in addition to their studies in order to contribute to our rent and other household expenses and they depend upon public transit to get to school, work and everywhere else. Because they were put back a year in school upon arriving in Canada, they were not even eligible for a student pass in their last year of high school, so were paying full adult fare. When transit fares keep going up, well beyond the rate of inflation as with the Community Pass, it places a real economic hardship on low-income families like ours. We all live together to save money and my older children contribute their income to the household to make ends meet. Yet, because I am on ODSP, it is very hard to get ahead since a small amount of extra household income means a reduction in my benefits.

We are all trying very hard to make a good life for ourselves in this city and to participate as good citizens. A Low Income Transit Pass, at the 62% discount, would allow those of us with limited income the freedom to go about our daily lives and contribute to this city without such a strain on our budgets.

Thank you.

APPENDIX F: SAMPLE MEDIA ADVISORY

City of Ottawa Releases Report on Low-Income Buss Pass

The Healthy Transportation Coalition and Making Voices Count urges the City of Ottawa Transit Commission to make the Low-income Bus Pass a reality for Ottawa.

Media contacts:

Travor Haché, Healthy Transportation Coalition, trevhache@gmail.com, 613-789-0604

Tong Zhao-Ansari, Making Voices Count, tzhaoansari@cawi-ivtf.org, 613-408-6001

May 4, 2016 (Ottawa) No one should have to pass up going to the doctor, getting a service or applying for a job because they can't afford to travel within Ottawa. The City of Ottawa studied the option to have a low-income bus pass. The report is now available and sites several options (see attached PDF). The city has not said which option (if any) it supports. The City's decision is expected at the Transit Commission meeting on Monday, May 9.

Of the two options in the report, the most desirable for residents is the 62% discount. This is similar to the seniors' monthly pass and the Community Pass. The 62% discount option would cost \$3.3 million per year. Research has shown that affordable transit promotes increased economic development and increases participation in the labour force.

Not mentioned in the report is that Ottawa lags behind other Canadian cities by not having a low-income bus pass. At least ten Ontario municipalities (Cornwall, Elliot Lake, Guelph, Halton Region, Hamilton, Kingston, Peterborough, Waterloo, Windsor, York Region) offer a low-income transit pass. Toronto is studying the possibility. Beyond Ontario, Edmonton, Banff, Saskatoon, Regina and British Columbia have versions of a low-income pass. (See attached Summary of Low Income Bus Passes, dated Aug. 2015)

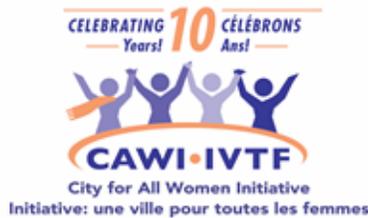
There tremendous support for Ottawa to implement a low-income transit pass. More than a thousand Ottawa residents have signed the petition for a low-income bus pass. The petition has been endorsed by 41 organizations and can be seen here: http://healthytransportationcoalition.nationbuilder.com/transit_pass_petition.

The Healthy Transportation Coalition and Making Voices Count urges the City of Ottawa Transit Commission to make the Low-income Bus Pass a reality for Ottawa. Public transportation should be affordable for everyone, including youth, elderly, people with a disability, and lower income Ottawa residents

Several delegations will speak at the Transit Commission meeting on May 9th when this issue will be discussed. We agree with the Chair of the Transit Commission Stephen Blais, who has said, "Exploring how we might better provide in a more equitable way service for those marginalized residents is a good thing." Now it is time for action!

APPENDIX G: SAMPLE PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



IT'S TIME to create a city for all with this year's City budget

OTTAWA -- March, 10, 2015 -- When Ottawa City Council meets to deliberate the City's 2015 budget, on March 11th, residents living on low-income and community groups who support them will be there to say that "it's time to create a city for all".

"When the City of Ottawa reduces services or raises fees to address its funding pressures, we need to ask ourselves about the impact this has on people who need these services the most" said Luc Ouellette, Coalition of Community Health and Resource Centres co-chair .

This concern is echoed by the Making Votes Count Where We Live project. The project played a key role in the latest municipal election, engaging with residents living on low-income and encouraging them to vote. The project is now supporting these residents to bring their views forward and make sure their voice is heard by the elected.

Residents, among them people living on low-income, will attend tomorrow's City Council meeting where they will be wearing "**IT'S TIME**" buttons.

"It's time to make sure service reductions or rising fees don't keep people who need these services the most from accessing them" says Suzanne Doerge from the City for All Women Initiative.

Making Votes Count Where We Live is a project co-sponsored by the City for All Women Initiative (CAWI) and by the Coalition of Community Health and Resource Centres. They bring together a range of community partners who share their concerns.

Making Votes Count Where We Live project participants shared their thoughts on the proposed budget:

Increases to transit fares

"As someone who relies on public transit as my only means of transportation, I know many people who find it increasingly difficult to travel to services, jobs and participate in the community. I know people isolated because they can't afford the bus fare. Raising bus fares once again will only make it harder, especially for people with more than one family member using transit" says Christine Santele, a Vanier resident.

Making Votes Count and its community partners are urging Ottawa City Council to freeze bus fares or expand the community pass to include people living on low-income, similarly to what is being done in other cities, such as Calgary.

“IT’S TIME to revisit the City’s policy that 55 cents per dollar from the fare box should cover the operating cost of transit. This puts a burden on people who have to choose between food on the table or \$3.20 in bus tickets for their fare” says Khadija Khan-Potter, a Kitchissippi resident.

Cuts to Services for People who are Homeless

On March 31st, four centres – Odawa, Centre 507, the Well and Cornerstone – serving people who are homeless will be unable to keep providing services they currently deliver to some of our city’s most vulnerable people . Loss of these services will leave many in our community without the support they need. These cuts have taken place because of a shift in funding from the federal government to a focus on housing with the Housing First approach. The City of Ottawa needs to allow for a transition period so that these services’ most vulnerable clients can be supported as these services are phased out and shifted towards a Housing First approach. “We want the City to find dollars in this year’s budget to enable these four centres to operate during this transition period” said by Eugene Williams, health promotion and community programs manager at the Somerset West Community Health Centre.

Play Structures in Parks at Risk

As revealed during the budget review at the Community and Protective Services Committee, the proposed budget does not provide enough funding to maintain park play structures and to keep them safe.

“For many families on low-income and recent immigrants, these parks are their backyard. With growing rates of obesity in children, it’s especially important that we do as much as possible to encourage them to develop a healthy and active lifestyle. This not only helps people stay active, but also helps reinforce a sense of community by having a safe and welcoming place where people can meet neighbours and make new friends. If there are not enough funds in the budget, this could be an example where it is worth it to raise taxes by more than the 2 per cent proposed. Investing through our tax dollars is more cost effective than paying for it ourselves” said Suzanne Doerge, executive director at CAWI.

IT’S TIME to work with City Council to ensure this budget will create a city for all.

Media contact:

Tong Zhao-Ansari
Civic Engagement Coordinator
City for All Women Initiative
Making Votes Count Where We Live
613-408-6001
tzhaoansari@cawi-ivtf.org

APPENDIX H: SAMPLE LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Poverty Reduction in Ontario Election

There's lots of talk about costs this election: the cost of energy, of layoffs and cutbacks, of gridlock and of the deficit and even government itself. But there are much greater costs that require voters' attention, because they are leaving our province in even worse straits - morally, socially, as well as in monetary terms.

Poverty costs us all. Studies show Canada and Ontario's economies lose more than \$13 billion per year due to poverty. It's estimated that poverty costs every household in the province nearly \$3,000 per year. The Ontario Association of Food Banks estimated in 2008 that the costs to our health care system alone are \$2.9 billion. **[Personalize this text: "Here in (Community Name), number of food bank visit are up / number of homeless is up. Other examples of local poverty impacts.]** All of this means lost economic opportunity and human potential, and untold amounts of hardship and despair. So what are the party leaders going to do about it?

Recently, Ontario Campaign 2000 and the 25 in 5 Network for Poverty Reduction sent a questionnaire to the Ontario Liberal, PC and NDP campaigns. The questions and the parties' responses can be found on the 25 in 5 website at www.25in5.ca.

We urge all Ontarians to review the responses. While none of the parties have outlined an anti-poverty plan that is as comprehensive as what people living in poverty require, it's notable that two parties are moving forward with poverty reduction, while one party is either silent on the issues or taking Ontario backwards. A snapshot shows that the both the Liberals and NDP would index the Ontario Child Benefit and make a modest increase to social assistance rates. The Liberals would implement coverage for prescription drugs, vision care, mental health services, and assistive devices or children on low income and commit to developing health benefits for low income adults. The NDP would extend dental coverage for more children in low income families. The Ontario PC party would freeze the Ontario Child Benefit and take \$1.5 billion out of social assistance funding. They did not respond to the question about health benefits. Parties were surveyed on other critical issues, including affordable housing minimum wage and child care.

In 2009, all three parties unanimously passed the Poverty Reduction Act and Ontario's first five-year Poverty Reduction Strategy focused on children. The second Strategy was expected this spring until the election forestalled that plan. The election campaign gives all of us a good opportunity to ask our local candidates how they plan to tackle the costs of poverty and secure a better, more prosperous future for all of us and our communities. These issues haven't made the front pages or the daily news. But it's vitally important for everyone who cares about opportunity, fairness, and social justice to understand the positions of the parties this time around, as there is a lot at stake for us all.

Insufficient action on poverty and inequality or destructive cuts to income supports run directly counter to the Poverty Reduction Act that all parties voted to support. They run directly counter to building a society that provides opportunity and a more even playing field for all. They run directly counter to the fair and just Ontario that we all deserve.

As you vote on June 12, remember that poverty costs. It costs individuals, and it costs us all. As you vote on June 12, remember to vote with those costs in mind.