

Dear Members of the Budget Committee,

People can't buy food, and yet City Council over their four year term is seriously suggesting a property tax hike approaching 30%. That tax hike then gets passed along to renters, so everyone will feel the burden. **No budget should exceed a tax hike that cannot be carried by the lowest income Londoners, otherwise you are just creating more poverty and risking people losing their homes.**

This budget is inconsiderate of people on fix incomes, low wage earners and renters, and any person that is struggling to keep their houses. **This budget should mimic what many people are doing in their own household - budgeting and cutting back on food, clothes and leisure to make ends meet.**

I am supportive of city program cuts or increases in price admissions except for swimming programs. Children tend to be over scheduled and over programmed. Reduction in some programs may allow children to play freely and unstructured. This is a positive.

*I support funding to the **public libraries*** because they are free, have free programming, welcoming, resourceful and is a 'third safe place' for anyone.

*I am supportive of funding for the **London Community Arts*** program because local arts is the foundation on an interactive and enjoyable city. Large concerts come and go but it is the creativity of local artists that define the unique energy of a city.

*I am supportive of better funding for the **Forestry Department*** so they can implement the Forest City Urban Forestry Strategy, and enforce an updated Tree Protection By-law on private property and illegal cutting.

I do not support increasing staffing for Tourism London. The programming tends to be more business focused rather than arts focused and expensive for users.

The **Neighbourhood Decision Making** program should be cut or suspended as it is not an equitable program. It is a competition and low income neighbourhoods or ones dominated by highrises may lack the funds for outreach and/or cannot access their neighbours in highrises without financing a mail drop. It takes money to compete.

I am not supportive of road work that is focused on relieving vehicle congestion as this only increases car volume, and discourages a transfer to public transit as this is a more efficient method of moving people. Unless there is a safety concern, widening roads should be cancelled.

I am not supportive of stormwater management projects because they are environmentally destructive, expensive and unnecessary. Stormwater projects remove floodplains which are needed to reduce flooding downstream, and transform natural creeks into sewage canals. The focus should be on enforcing **Low Impact Development (LID)** on new development sites, road work and on private property. LID was first implemented in New York State years ago to reduce the need for expensive flood control. Even though LID has been widely implemented across cities everywhere, London continues to recklessly use outdated and expensive flood control on the backs of taxpayers.

I am not supportive of any taxpayer money being allocated to the Harris Park stormwater project as it is unnecessary as proposed. There are better methods to stabilize the embankment at Harris Park without the need to quarry thousands of tonnes of river rock. It is a mind-boggling project with an immense environmental footprint.

Even though I am generally supportive of people working from home, **I am not supportive of tax dollars funding employees working from home** at this time. It is a luxury item.

This budget should be a 'critical needs' budget that benefits a wide spectrum of residents. Until, we pass this period of hardship and the anticipated coming recession, any items that are 'bonus' should be suspended.

Police Budget

I am appalled that London Police are defending their budget by telling Londoners that their city is unsafe. It is low and manipulative. The police and Mayor Morgan know that people are motivated by fear and perception of safety over facts and actual risk. More money to police does not reduce crime or increase safety.

Mayor Josh Morgan has publicly stated that Londoners feel unsafe. How so? My guess is that people feel unsafe because homelessness is so visible. If true, than it is his responsibility to educate residents that homeless and/or addicts are not automatically dangerous. Otherwise he is perpetuating a stereotype.

The police budget is sucking the oxygen out of the room. It is starving much needed programs that have direct benefits to Londoners.

What is outstanding is that the London Police Board 'face', for the most part, reflects privilege and a group of individuals that likely have little interaction with police. Diverse faces bring a diversity of life experiences that is much needed when working through best practices on policing. They likely cannot understand that some may view an increased police presence as threatening such as First Nations. In fact, **Councillor Stevenson** who sits on the Board mused of jailing homeless individuals.

Therefore, Council needs to do the work because the Board hasn't done it. London is not an unsafe city, and certainly not more unsafe than any other city. It is situated on the 401 corridor and has always had crime of organized theft, and trafficking. This is nothing new and most gun violence is not random.

People are not opposed to funding the police, but many oppose this budget. It is the wrong time. Send it back, and ask that they do it again or have it arbitrated. I cannot respect a police chief, or his supporters, that use fear mongering to channel unprecedented resources to police when there are greater needs in this city.

AnnaMaria Valastro.