

## **PRESENTATION TO LONDON CITY COUNCIL BUDGET COMMITTEE**

*G. Tella Murray - Chair - London Council*

GOOD AFTERNOON. MY NAME IS MURRAY HAMILTON AND I AM  
HERE REPRESENTING THE LONDON COUNCIL OF THE SOCIETY  
OF ST. VINCENT DE PAUL... THIS IS OUR COUNCIL'S FIRST PRESENTATION  
TO A BUDGET COMMITTEE AND IT IS SOMEWHAT UNIQUE ...IN THAT WE  
ARE NOT HERE TO ASK FOR ANY MONEY... AT LEAST NOT FOR OURSELVES.

SO YOU MAY BE ASKING...WHO ARE THESE PEOPLE AND WHAT DO THEY  
WANT? THE SOCIETY OF ST. VINCENT DE PAUL IS A WORLD WIDE  
ORGANIZATION OF CATHOLIC LAYPERSONS, WHOSE MISSION IS TO "LIVE  
THE GOSPEL MESSAGE, BY SERVING THE POOR WITH LOVE, RESPECT,  
JUSTICE AND JOY". IN THE LONDON COUNCIL THERE ARE TWELVE SSVP  
CONFERENCES, ONE IN EACH OF THE ROMAN CATHOLIC  
PARISHES IN THE CITY. THE PRIMARY MANDATE OF VINCENTIANS IS TO  
SERVE THE POOR THROUGH THE DISTRIBUTION OF EMERGENCY FOOD,  
CLOTHING AND FURNITURE TO FAMILIES WITHIN OUR PARISH  
BOUNDARIES... WITHOUT REGARD TO CREED COLOUR OR ETHNIC  
BACKGROUND. LAST YEAR 380 VINCENTIAN VOLUNTEERS MADE 500  
HOME VISITS AND ASSISTED MORE THAN 12,500 ADULTS AND CHILDREN.  
THE LONDON COUNCIL ALSO MANAGES TWO THRIFT STORES IN THE CITY.

ALL SSVP CONFERENCES ARE ALSO COMMITTED TO ADVOCATE FOR SYSTEMIC CHANGE TO OUR INSTITUTIONS TO BREAK THE CYCLE OF POVERTY AND ENABLE ALL CITIZENS TO LIVE COMFORTABLY IN SAFETY AND SECURITY.

THE SOCIETY OF ST. VINCENT DE PAUL WOULD LIKE TO CONGRATULATE MAYOR BROWN, COUNCILLOR CASSIDY, DR. CHRIS MACKEY AND ALL THE MEMBERS OF THE MAYOR'S ADVISORY PANEL ON POVERTY FOR THE EXCELLENT WORK THAT THEY HAVE UNDERTAKEN TO DEFINE AND BETTER UNDERSTAND THE DEPTH OF POVERTY IN OUR COMMUNITY AND TO PRESENT BOTH SHORT AND LONG TERM PLANS TO COMBAT ITS DEVASTATING EFFECTS ON FAMILIES AND THE COMMUNITY AS A WHOLE. THE PROCESS OF CONSULTATION WAS EXCELLENT AND THE DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS ARE VERY THOROUGH.

**HOWEVER,** WE ARE CONCERNED ABOUT THE TIMING OF THESE BUDGET DELIBERATIONS AND THE APPROVAL OF THIS MULTI-YEAR BUDGET IN THE CONTEXT OF THE PANEL'S WORK. WE UNDERSTAND THE PANEL'S RECOMMENDATIONS WILL BE DELIVERED <sup>Not</sup> ~~ON~~ <sup>until</sup> MARCH 31<sup>st</sup>....WELL AFTER COUNCIL'S APPROVAL OF THE BUDGET.

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**ACCORDINGLY, WE ARE HERE TODAY TO STRONGLY URGE COUNCIL TO SET ASIDE A SUBSTANTIAL ALLOTMENT OF NEW MONEY TO BEGIN TO ADDRESS THE PANEL'S TOP PRORITIES IN THE CURRENT FISCAL YEAR AND IN THE YEARS IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING.**

TO FAIL TO DO SO WOULD RESULT IN A MISSED OPPORTUNITY TO BEGIN THE HARD WORK THAT LIES AHEAD...WORK FOR WHICH THERE IS A GREAT DEAL OF COMMUNITY SUPPORT. WE ARE RECOMMENDING THAT COUNCIL SET ASIDE **SEVERAL HUNDRED THOUSAND DOLLARS** IN THE CURRENT YEAR'S BUDGET TO IMMEDIATELY ADDRESS THE MOST URGENT NEEDS.

*the Security* <sup>SD</sup> HAS FROM OUR PERSPECTIVE, ST. VINCENT DE PAUL ~~HAVE~~ IDENTIFIED THREE PRIORITIES, ALL OF WHICH HAVE LOCAL GOVERNMENT RESPONSIBILITY.

**THE FIRST** IS TRANSPORTATION. THE MAYORS PANEL IS SUGGESTING THE DEVELOPMENT OF A **NEW SYSTEM OF SUBSIDY** FOR PUBLIC TRANSIT BASED ON INCOME. THIS WOULD BE CONSISTENT WITH THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF A COMMUNITY STAKEHOLDERS GROUP, MADE IN

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2015 AND WOULD BRING LONDON INTO LINE WITH VIRTUALLY ALL NEIGHBORING MUNICIPALITIES. NEW RESOURCES FOR THIS REDESIGNED MODEL COULD BE ADDED TO A <sup>N</sup>REDESIGNED EXISTING PROGRAM AND QUICKLY CREATE A <sup>service</sup>PROGRAM THAT ENABLES ALL LOW INCOME LONDONERS MORE <sup>economically</sup>EASILY GET TO WORK, TRAINING, MEDICAL APPOINTMENTS AND OTHER COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES. AFTER FIFTEEN YEARS OF PASSING THE BUCK AND PROCRASTINATION, LET'S JUST DO IT.

OUR SECOND SUGGESTION INVOLVES PUBLIC HOUSING.

OTHER THAN MONEY, PERHAPS THE SINGLE GREATEST BARRIER FACING LOWER INCOME FAMILIES IS THE LACK OF COMFORTABLE, AFFORDABLE HOUSING. CITIZENS CANNOT BEGIN TO IMPROVE THEIR STANDARD OF LIVING UNLESS THEY ARE ASSURED SAFE, <sup>A</sup>HEALTHY LIVING ENVIRONMENT, FROM WHERE THEY CAN BEGIN TO CONSIDER EMPLOYMENT, TRAINING OR OTHER COMMUNITY SUPPORT PROGRAMS THAT WILL LEAD TO AN ENHANCED QUALITY OF LIFE. MUCH OF LONDON'S PUBLIC HOUSING WAS BUILT IN THE 1970'S. NEW FUNDING IS NEEDED TO REDEVELOP THESE PROPERTIES, TO BETTER UTILIZE THE LAND AND UPGRADE TO NEW INTENSITY MODELS THAT ARE MORE FULLY INTEGRATED WITHIN THE COMMUNITY. AGAIN WE RECOMMEND THAT FUNDING BE ALLOCATED TO BEGIN THIS PROCESS IN THE CURRENT FISCAL YEAR.

**THIRDLY, ALL OF THE STUDIES AND EXPERTS AGREE THAT EDUCATION AND TRAINING AND APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAMS ARE AN ESSENTIAL COG IN ANY ANTI-POVERTY STRATEGY. THEY ALSO AGREE THAT AFFORDABLE, ACCESSIBLE CHILD CARE IS AN ESSENTIAL SUPPORT TO ANY EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM. CHILD CARE NOT ONLY SUPPORTS PARENTS TO REACH THEIR GOALS, IT PROVIDES THE CHILD WITH A HEAD START ON THEIR JOURNEY OF LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT, THAT MAY WELL ASSIST THEM AVOID THE POVERTY TRAP IN THE YEARS AHEAD.**

**CHILD CARE IS A MUNICIPAL RESPONSIBILITY. PRIORITY MUST BE GIVEN TO THE DEVELOPMENT AND LOCATION OF SUFFICIENT CHILD CARE SPACES TO MAKE THIS STRATEGY WORK IN LONDON. CURRENTLY 1287 FAMILIES ARE ON THE WAITING LIST FOR CHILD CARE, MORE THAN 250 OF THEM REQUIRING MUNICIPAL SUBSIDIES TO MAKE CHILD CARE A REALITY FOR THEM. THESE WAITING LISTS MUST BE REDUCED AND PARENTS ASSISTED TO REACH THEIR GOALS OF INDEPENDENCE AND SELF SUFFICIENCY.**

**TO CONCLUDE, WE BELIEVE THE MAYOR'S PANEL HAS CREATED A SENSE OF ENTUSIASM AND CONFIDENCE THAT LONDON CAN BREAK THE MOLD OF INTERGENERATIONAL POVERY AND MAKE OUR COMMUNITY A COMFOTABLE HOME FOR ALL ITS CITIZENS...BUT WE MUST NOT DELAY ~~AND ALLOW LETHARGY TAKE HOLD~~. FUNDS MUST BE SET ASIDE IN THIS YEAR'S BUDGET TO ALLOW WORK TO BEGIN IMMEDIATELY ON SOME OF THESE MOST URGENT PRIORITIES.**

**WE HEAR A GREAT DEAL OF DISCUSSION THESE DAYS FROM ALL LEVELS OF GOVERNMENT ABOUT THE NEED TO INVEST IN INFRASTRUCTURE.....IN BRIDGES, ROADS AND SEWERS. THESE ARE IMPORTANT PRIORITIES AND WILL CREATE JOBS FOR MANY CANADIANS.**

**BUT...THERE IS ANOTHER KIND OF INFRASTRUCTURE. I AM REFERRING HERE TO SOCIAL INFRASTRUCTURE. THERE IS AN EQUALLY URGENT NEED TO REPAIR OUR SOCIAL SAFETY NET...TO ENSURE PUBLIC SERVICE SYSTEMS FOR SOCIAL ASSSISTANCE, TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT, PUBLIC HEALTH, CHILD CARE, HOUSING AND PUBLIC TRANSIT ~~SERVICES~~...ARE**

ADEQUATE TO MEET TODAY'S NEEDS.

THE MAYOR'S PANEL HAS POINTED THE WAY. WE URGE COUNCIL TO DO YOUR PART AND ALLOCATE SUBSTANTIAL RESOURCES IN THE CURRENT BUDGET TO GET THE PROCESS STARTED. THESE PROBLEMS CAN BE FIXED. OTHER JURISDICTIONS HAVE DONE SO.

IT'S NOT ABOUT CHARITY. IT'S ABOUT JUSTICE.

THANK YOU.

A handwritten mark or signature, possibly initials, located at the bottom center of the page. It consists of a large, stylized letter 'G' with a smaller '7' or similar character inside it.