

Budget Presentation at City Hall Feb 13

I'm Sue Wilson, a Sister of St. Joseph, and I'm speaking to you today on behalf of the Multi-faith Social Action Coalition --- bringing together faith communities from Jewish, Muslim and Unitarian traditions as well as major Christian denominations and organizations in the city.

Some might ask what a faith-based group has to offer to budget deliberations. But, of course, budgets are moral documents, documents that reveal the core values of a community and shape significantly how the people of that community will be in relationship with each other.

Without a doubt there are conflicting interests that must be worked through in making a budget. We all know the challenge of making difficult decisions about how best to use our limited resources. And that's why it is so critical to have strong principles to guide our decision-making.

Today, the Multi-faith Social Action Coalition is urging you to hold the principle of equity as your most critical principle for guiding your decision-making. Equity ensures that all of us have the basic resources and opportunities that we need to participate in the life of our community. Equity insists that, in our budget decision-making, we must privilege those who have the least. We must make sure that they have access to the basics: safe affordable housing, public transportation, recreation, and everyday library access to the internet for families who don't have internet at home. And equity also goes further, refusing, for example, to fund affordable housing by taking money from programs like London Cares. That's just wrong.

Equity creates social inclusion and protects the dignity of each person. Our faith communities know this to be so critical that we are committed to helping in this work. Let me give you one simple example: Last year, **x** of our faith communities, put a collective total of **\$x** of our human and financial resources into addressing the issue of poverty, and **\$x** were distributed in London alone. We did this through food banks, etc

Please understand – this is just the tip of the iceberg. This is just **x** faith communities. There are dozens more (**how many?**) in the city, doing the same thing.

Through these resources, we are demonstrating our commitment to address poverty and create a strong community. But increasingly, we are being abandoned by all levels of government. We cannot do this alone. We need you as partners in this work. We need you to remember that a moral budget privileges those community members who do not have access to basic resources and opportunities.