

<b>TO:</b>	<b>CHAIR AND MEMBERS COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE MEETING OF NOVEMBER 23, 2011</b>
<b>FROM:</b>	<b>ROSS L. FAIR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY SERVICES</b>
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b>RESPONSE OF THE CIVIC ADMINISTRATION TO CONCERNS RAISED BY OCCUPY LONDON AT COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE</b>

<b>RECOMMENDATION</b>
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That, on the recommendation of the Executive Director of Community Services this report **BE RECEIVED** for information purposes

<b>PREVIOUS REPORTS PERTINENT TO THIS MATTER</b>
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n/a

<b>BACKGROUND</b>
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At the invitation of the Mayor, members of Occupy London appeared before a Special Meeting of the Committee of the Whole on Friday, November 7<sup>th</sup>, 2011.

At the end of the session, Committee of the Whole passed the following recommendation:

*That comments from the three designated representatives of Occupy London, as well as the additional comments from various individuals invited to come forward and speak at the October 28<sup>th</sup>, 2011 Special Meeting of the Committee of the Whole, **BE REFERRED** to the Civic Administration for consideration and report back at a future date.*

A summary of the comments made at the meeting are attached hereto as Appendix 1.

In reviewing this document the comments may be grouped as follows:

- Concerns about the state of the local, national and international economy/growing disparity of income
- Concerns about several Social Policy Issues
  - Poverty
  - Homelessness
  - Addiction and mental illness
  - Safety of emergency shelters
- Concerns about Governance and Citizen Rights

This report will provide commentary on the first two sets of concerns. The comments about Governance and Citizen Rights are for members of City Council to consider.

**THE ECONOMY:**

By most accounts the Occupy Movement began with a Tumblr post entitled “We are the 99 per cent.” Tumblr is a website and free blog hosting platform. The posting may be found here: <http://wearethe99percent.tumblr.com/>

In an October 4<sup>th</sup>, 2011 column published in the Washington Post, Ezra Klein made the following statement after reviewing the postings on this Tumblr:

*These are not rants against the system. They're not anarchist manifestos. They're not calls for a revolution. They're small stories of people who played by the rules, did what they were told, and now have nothing to show for it. Or, worse, they have tens of thousands in debt to show for it.*

David Olive, writing in the Toronto Star on October 5<sup>th</sup> 2011 made a similar observation:

The social protest launched so recently as Occupy Wall Street that soon evolved into the "We Are the 99 Percent" movement is not a repudiation of capitalism. The aggrieved 99 Percenters, already with chapters in more than 160 countries in North America, Europe, Asia and Australia, including Toronto and seven other Canadian cities, simply want the system to work for everyone. They are literally sick of being left out.

## ***What is the economic data that is supporting the claims of the 99 percenters and the Occupy Movement?***

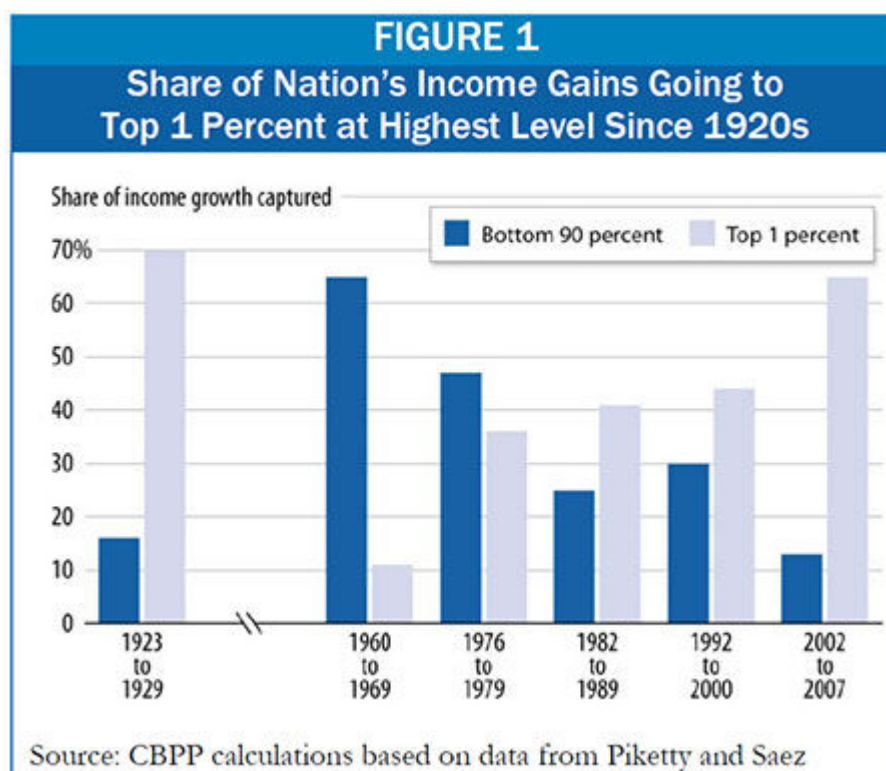
### **THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA:**

The following section of this report is copied from the website of thinkprogress an American think tank. The website can be found here:

<http://thinkprogress.org/economy/2011/10/03/334156/top-five-wealthiest-one-percent/>

Thinkprogress has identified 5 facts about the richest 1% in America:

1. Owns 40 Percent Of The Nation's Wealth
  2. Take Home 24 Percent Of National Income
  3. Own Half Of The Country's Stocks, Bonds, And Mutual Funds
  4. Have Only 5 Percent Of The Nation's Personal Debt
  5. Are Taking In More Of The Nation's Income Than At Any Other Time Since The 1920s.
- Figure 1 illustrates this point



## **CANADA:**

In her December, 2010 report for the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives entitled: *The Rise of Canada's Richest 1%* economist Armine Yalnizyan made the following points:

- *Canada's richest 1% - the 246,000 privileged few whose average income is \$405,000-took almost a third (32%) of all growth in incomes in the fastest growing decade in this generation, 1997-2007.*
- *The richest 1% took almost a third of all growth in one of the slowest growing decades in recent history, too, 1987-1997. This eclipses anything seen before in Canadian history, including the share of gains eaten up by the richest 1% in the Roaring Twenties.*
- *In 1948 the top marginal tax rate was 80% on taxable income over \$250,000 which would be \$2.37M. in today's dollars. The top tax rate in 2009m averaged across Canada, was 42.9% for incomes above \$126,264. The last time the richest Canadians were taxed at this level was in the 1920's.*
- *Combine record-breaking growth in incomes with historically low top tax rates, and the richest 1% is taking a bigger piece of the economic pie today than at any time in the past century.*
- *A recent private sector study shows that by the end of 2009, 3.8% of Canadian households controlled \$1.78 trillion dollars of financial wealth, or 67% of the total*

The full report may be found at:

<http://www.policyalternatives.ca/publications/reports/rise-canadas-richest-1>

## **COMMENTS:**

These researchers confirm the top 1% of earners in the U.S. and Canada is earning more and taking home more income than at any time since the 1920's. Left unanswered are questions related to how much wealth was created by this 1% and how this wealth may have contributed to job creation and wealth creation for others and whether there is a sense of whether this income was "earned" via good labour or smart investment.

## **WHAT ARE THE PROPOSALS FROM THE OCCUPY MOVEMENT FOR ECONOMIC REFORM?**

The administration has conducted a summary scan of various media and web sites related to the Occupy Movement and the range of solutions to the "economic problem" seems to range from tweaking of the tax system; more significant and fundamental change to income redistribution; to changes to world monetary and economic systems. Analysis of these recommendations and potential impacts are beyond the scope of this report and the expertise of the civic administration.

## **LOCAL SOLUTIONS:**

City Council has approved its Strategic Plan for 2011-2014. It has established a Vision: London, Ontario: The City of Opportunity. One of Council's results is "A Strong Economy". A number of strategies have been developed and success measures established. Council has created a new standing committee entitled the "Investment and Economic Prosperity Committee" whose mandate will be to consider programs and initiatives that will grow the local economy and create jobs within a responsible property tax regime.

## **POSSIBLE RECOMMENDATIONS FOR COUNCIL CONSIDERATION:**

Should City Council wish to pass recommendations in response to the economic arguments articulated by the larger Occupy movement it could consider the following:

*That the Mayor **BE REQUESTED** to write to the Prime Minister of Canada and to the Premier of Ontario to request that their Governments:*

- a) Consider measures to ensure that all Londoners, Ontarians, and Canadians have opportunities to participate in and enjoy the benefits of meaningful employment*
- b) Commit to making financial investments in London and the region to ensure economic growth and new jobs*

*That copies of these letters **BE SENT** to area MP's, MPP's the Federation of Canadian Municipalities and the Association of Municipalities of Ontario*

## **SOCIAL POLICY ISSUES:**

The Occupy London speakers identified concerns with regards to poverty, homelessness, addiction and Mental Illness. There was also reference to the high cost of education and the high number of educated young people who have been unable to find meaningful work.

### **COMMENTS:**

City Council is well-aware of these important social policy issues and it has taken a number of proactive and innovative steps to deal with these issues within its limited mandate and finances.

Of particular note, has been Council's ongoing policy and financial commitment to the creation of new affordable units, and to deliver innovative supports to assist the homeless. London's Community Housing Strategy and its Homelessness Plan are the products of intensive community consultation, research and commitment to innovation. In partnership with the senior orders of government and community partners, these plans, if successful will create an additional 900 units of affordable housing, both within independent and supportive housing arrangements. If successful, these plans will reduce the number of individuals in our community living on the streets or who are precariously housed and should reduce our reliance on emergency shelter beds.

The provision of solutions to issues of addiction and mental illness is a provincial responsibility. City Council has been active in advocating for increased provincial investment and in making a direct investment in support of homeless individuals suffering from addiction and mental illness through London CARES.

Copies of these plans are available at [www.london.ca](http://www.london.ca)

The concerns about safety in the City's emergency shelters are noted and the civic administration will follow up with service providers.

With regards to the issue of poverty, the City, with its community partners, has been very active. Through its investment in the Child and Youth Network, an Ending Poverty strategy targeted to children, youth and families has been developed, as has strategies for increasing literacy levels and health eating and physical activity. A Food Charter aimed at increasing food security in London has been developed and is in implementation stage.

From an advocacy perspective, both through the Child and Youth Network and via Council resolutions the City has been a leader in advocating for changes to the social assistance system. Copies of City and Child and Youth Network submissions to the Social Assistance Review Commission may be found at

<http://www.socialassistancereview.ca/written-submissions>

In spite of these efforts, more needs to be done. Too many Londoners live in poverty, too many homeless or precariously housed; too many of the homeless suffering from the impacts of addiction and mental illness.



## APPENDIX A



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**London**  
CANADA

Office of the Executive Director

NOV 14 2011

**Community Services**

November 8, 2011

J. A. Fielding  
City Manager

I hereby certify that the Municipal Council, at its session held on November 7, 2011 resolved:

That comments from the three designated representatives of Occupy London, as well as the additional comments from various other individuals invited to come forward and speak at the October 28, 2011 Special Meeting of the Committee of the Whole, **BE REFERRED** to the Civic Administration for consideration and report back at a future date:

#### Comments from Designated Representatives of Occupy London:

**Courtney:** Thank you to the Committee for giving Occupy London an opportunity to be heard by the Council Members; there are a myriad of reasons why the occupants are in Victoria Park in political protest; City Council needs to ensure the safety of the occupants; the occupants are maintaining a family-friendly area, they have consensus on a safe-space statement and are committed to ensuring the occupied area is kept clean; Council Members should withhold making a decision for two weeks about removing the occupants from Victoria Park so that careful thought can be given to making such a decision.

**Daniella:** The safety and security of the occupants is important; occupants are in Victoria Park to take a stance for individual reasons; they are keeping the occupied area clean; they have the support of the community and small business; London is the first City to offer dialogue with the Municipal Council; the occupancy should be allowed to continue; City should guarantee the safety of the occupants and keep the lines of communication open; while the media has portrayed the occupants as homeless and dirty, there are well-educated people who are occupying the Park; some of the issues include homelessness, poverty and sheltering, but the movement itself is a global one about global issues.

**Matthew:** Thank you to the Committee for allowing the Occupants to attend the meeting; the occupants feel they have a legal right to occupy Victoria Park; they have regular general assembly meetings, twice daily and the tents are there for their safety and protection; a key issue is the "trickle down" economic effect and also corporate accountability is at an all time low and there is a great need to manage debts and loans.

#### General Summary of Comments from Other Audience Members Invited to Speak:

- the London District Labour Council (LDLC) recognizes and supports the local, national and international significance of the "Occupy" movement;
- the LDLC is concerned about youth unemployment, poverty, and homelessness;
- the LDLC supports the activists rightly challenging greed;
- community-based health care is not working to address mental health issues;
- London is the best place to be if you are homeless, however monies are going to shelters rather than to the people;
- women should be moved from the Men's Mission as they are not in a safe setting there;
- there should be legislative tools for civic engagement;
- elected officials need to be held accountable;
- there needs to be legal recognition of petitioners and referendums for such things as the future of London Hydro;
- a strong citizen voice would eliminate the need for political representation;
- federal issues are a concern, including monetary reform (e.g. controlling national debt, reducing interest paid to banks)
- we should be concerned about peace;
- public apathy is a concern;
- the Mayor should be bringing the voice of Occupy London to Ottawa;
- the rising cost of education is making it inaccessible to many individuals;