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City of Toronto 1998 budget information

A Message from the Mayor

As Mayor of the new City of Toronto, I am pleased to present the 1998 budget – the first for our newly amalgamated city. The approval of the budget reflects Council's commitment to deliver a **zero tax increase** and maintain the quality services that make Toronto among the best cities in the world in which to live and work.

I said it and we did it! By holding the budget at \$5.6 billion, City Council has frozen 1998 property taxes at 1997 levels. Any changes to the taxes that Toronto homeowners and businesses receive will be the result of the provincial government's new property assessment system and education policies.

Although we faced many challenges as a result of amalgamation, council has preserved the core services that you value so highly. Despite provincial cut backs in funding and the downloading of additional programs and costs, we will continue to deliver the high level of essential public services such as policing, fire protection, ambulance, public transit, welfare and social housing that you, the citizens of this great city, expect from your local government. In addition, we will be investing an additional \$2 million dollars in new public health programs geared towards meeting the needs of our children. More money is also being allocated in 1998 to the Community Grants Program to cover a wide range of Arts, Culture and Heritage, Community Services, Public Health, Tourism and Multi Cultural Programs.

Our \$1 billion capital budget also reflects Council's commitment to meeting the needs of our residents. We will continue to invest in our community centres and facilities, as well as providing the resources needed to improve our roadways and public transit system.

The approval of the 1998 budget is considered the beginning, not the end, of a challenging task. The goal for the future is to ensure that we continue to deliver quality services to our residents in the most cost efficient manner possible and look at new ways of doing business.

I would like to thank all Members of Council, the Budget Committee, members of the Standing Committees, the Community Councils, the Chief Administrative Officer, the Chief Financial Officer and all staff for a fantastic, collaborative effort. I look forward to working with City Council and staff as we prepare for the future challenges to come.

Mel Lastman
Mayor
City of Toronto