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City of Toronto 2002 budget information

City budget 2002 - Councillor David Shiner's remarks

January 8, 2002

As the Mayor has indicated this is going to be another financially challenging year with some very difficult choices for us as a Council to make.

We have accomplished a lot over the past four years - amalgamating seven of the best municipal governments into the largest City Government in Canada. We found savings from amalgamation and efficiencies, which were used to offset Provincial Downloading and inflationary pressures.

Police, Fire, Ambulance, Public Health, Transit, Homeless & Shelters programs and many other services that make Toronto the great City that it is have been enhanced.

We did a good job with this very difficult undertaking with little or no assistance from the Federal or Provincial Governments.

In the past the budget process was not very inclusive. It was difficult to obtain information and understand how priorities were being set.

Last year we set out to change the process and separate ourselves from the old ways. It wasn't an easy task but we rose to the occasion and came together to begin the transition from the old to the new.

At our Standing Committees & Agencies Boards and Commissions, Members of Council carried out a much more thorough review of the budgets than in previous years, finding savings and suggesting changes to the CAO's recommendations.

The 2002 budget process utilizes numerous suggestions that were generated during the debriefing sessions. This Council endorsed process provides a transitional phase towards the full implementation of the new budget process for the 2003 budget cycle.

The 2002 budget reflects a significant change from last year. It focuses on efficiencies and accountability.

This year's budget review will emphasize each Program's key services, goals and objectives.

The Operating Budgets for each Department, Agency, Board & Commission have been categorized into three major components, the base budget, service level adjustments and new initiatives. Budgets have also been compiled for Enhanced Emergency Planning and Response and for World Youth Day, to separate the financial effect of these activities from the Departments Base Budget.



Each Department and A.B.C. have been asked to do a review of all their capital projects, whether previously approved for funding or newly proposed, and prioritize them within the five new categories of Health & Safety, Legislated, State of Good Repair, Service Improvement and Enhancement and Growth.

Over the last four months our new C.A.O, working with our Commissioners and Finance Staff have done a thorough review of their needs. Their submission recommends some difficult choices for Council to make. The C.A.O's recommendation is for a 1.7 per cent increase across the entire tax base. Due to Provincial Legislation, Commercial and Industrial properties are exempt from tax increases, as a result, Residential Property tax payers face a 4.8 per cent increase.

We can accept the CAO's recommendations or look for further savings. I would request that if you wish to add to the recommendations, you suggest another reduction to offset the increase.

We are not able to afford everything we want and are no longer in a position to afford everything we have.

Promises made by the Federal Government to fund public transit have still not been kept. Downloading by the Provincial Government has not been revenue neutral.

It is time for the Provincial Government to keep its commitment to find alternate sources of funding for education and allow the City to use this room to lower taxes and fund municipal services.

We cannot find the solutions alone and need to build new partnerships with our Provincial and Federal Governments. We cannot afford to fight with each other. Our focus has to be on our constituents and what's best for them.

This is not going to be an easy budget. Some very difficult decisions will have to be made.

I look forward to your comments, recommendations and support during this year's deliberations.