

Social Planning Council of Ottawa

**CONSULTATIONS ON
OTTAWA'S
2004 BUDGET**

January 14 and 17, 2004

Summary Report

Report Released January 2004

This consultation process was a joint project of
the City of Ottawa
and the
the Social Planning Council of Ottawa



ISBN # 1-895732-33 -6

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Introduction

In January 2004, the Social Planning Council and the City of Ottawa collaborated to hold two consultations within Phase One of the 2004 City Budget Process. The two sessions were intended for community organizations in the areas of arts, culture, recreation, health and social services. Over 65 people attended the two consultations.

The meetings were part of a broader consultation process with the community, in which the City was soliciting feedback on specific questions related to the preparation of the 2004 budget. The draft budget was not available for these pre-budget consultations, but the general fiscal outlook for the City was presented. Participants in all the consultations, including these two for the People Services constituency, were asked their views with respect to:

- A property tax increase of 0%, 3%, 6% or 9%, with related impact on services;
- Their priorities within the City's services; and
- Possible areas for service reductions or cuts.

This report summarizes the input from the two sessions, which were held on Jan. 14 and Jan 17, 2004. In both meetings, participants were divided into four discussion groups for the majority of the meeting time. Each discussion group (i.e. eight in total) discussed the same questions, with the assistance of a facilitator. The headings throughout this report reflect the questions which were posed to each group.

There was a substantial degree of agreement between the eight discussion groups on the need for a tax increase, the need to find efficiencies and eliminate waste at the City, and the need to protect People Services from further cuts. There was substantial resistance to ranking services against each other, with many groups choosing to identify principles which decision-makers could use for ranking. As well, many participants were unhappy with the consultation process in general, and recommended an improved process in the future, with a longer timeframe for input and a longer financial plan. In addition, many useful suggestions were made which are summarized below. Overall, there was very high support for finding the means to preserve the high quality of life in Ottawa.

We would like to offer our sincere thanks to all those who participated in these consultations.

Which tax scenario would you choose?

"Let's have the courage to pay for what we said we wanted in the Ottawa 20/20 Planning Process."

A participant, Jan. 14, 2004

Strong general support for a tax increase

There was strong support in the discussion groups for a property tax increase¹ to preserve the quality of life in Ottawa, especially the People Services portfolio. 51% supported a 9% increase. 67% voted for an increase of 8% or higher. Only 3% did not support a property tax increase.² While this is a very small sample, it does indicate a strong tolerance and desire for a tax increase to preserve services.

The primary reasons given for supporting a property tax increase were:

- Residents place a high value on the quality of life in Ottawa and are willing to pay a tax increase to preserve the services that result in the high quality of life in Ottawa
- The budget should reflect the principles set out in the Ottawa 20/20 planning process, as these recommendations were based on extensive consultation. Quality of life was identified as one of the top priorities in that process, because it is highly valued by people in Ottawa and because it is a key factor in attracting businesses and business investment.
- Many participants identified that regular tax increases to reflect the cost of living are proper planning, should have been implemented in past years, and should continue to be put in place annually. Residents understand the City cannot continue to provide the same level of services if it does not have a way to pay for increased costs.
- Because of inflation, in real dollars the City has actually experienced a decrease in the gross property tax collected over the last decade.
- Even the 9.7% tax increase is a small amount per person, less than a dollar a day.
- If user fees were increased instead of taxes, residents would soon pay the same amount, but it would affect low income residents more than other residents.
- Services are stretched to the limit and in many cases cannot sustain any more cuts. This is particularly true with respect to People Services, which have experienced several rounds of cuts over the last decade.

Considerations with respect to the amount and timing of a tax increase

The exact amount of a tax increase varied between participants, with two thirds (67%) of participants supporting at least an 8% increase.

Over half of participants supported a 9% increase. Their reasons included many of the points listed above, as well as the following additional observations:

- There is a need for an increase in services, not just maintenance of current levels. This will require additional funding.
- We have fallen behind, due to inflation and the fact that taxes were not raised for over a decade³

¹ The three tax scenarios proposed by the City refer to a property tax increase in gross property tax revenues. This does not translate directly into an equivalent increase in the mill rate.

² A further 3% abstained.

³ There was significant frustration that the City information on the budget was saying there had been no tax increase for over a decade, when many individuals have had a tax increase. The City clarified that there has not been an increase in gross tax revenues, but that many individuals have had an increase due to changes in the Provincial system of assessment, and Provincial changes which shifted more of the property

One participant supported an increase above 9%.

Among participants who supported a 3% - 8% increase, the reasons given were:

- There is room for the City to make cuts (we need to do more for ourselves, there is waste and inefficiency, etc.)
- There needs to be more transparency about where money goes before the highest proposed increase is put in place.

In many discussion groups, participants indicated they were willing to pay an increase if there were an identified longer term financial plan of 4 – 5 years and transparency with respect to how the money would be spent. Some felt tax increases in this first year of a plan should be moderate, with additional increases phased in over time. There was significant support for holding services in place, and incrementally addressing any budget shortfall over the next few years, i.e. maintaining the services in the short term in recognition that it is more difficult to re-establish services once they have been dismantled.

Concerns regarding a tax increase

Among those who did support a tax increase, many felt there would have to be some means to assist low income people, particularly seniors, who would face hardship because of a property tax increase.

Among participants who did not support a tax increase, the reasons given were:

- There is waste and inefficiency which should be fixed. Giving more money will only encourage waste and inefficiency to continue
- Many residents cannot afford an increase, particularly low income residents and many seniors
- The City is giving mixed messages by saying there is a budget crisis and at the same time incurring substantial costs that many feel are unnecessary (legal fees, severance packages, etc.)

Some participants from rural areas, although they supported some level of tax increase, identified that the level of services in the rural areas is substantially lower. For this reason, they felt there should be a system of differential tax rates, as it is unfair for rural residents to pay for services they do not have.

The need for the City to pursue other revenues

In several groups participants identified the need for the City to pursue other revenues. In particular:

- The City needs to press with other municipalities for an overhaul of the property tax system, to achieve more fairness
- The City should get together with the Federal government to get the “New Deal for Cities” and get more cash as promised
- Many felt businesses are not paying their fair share, particularly since the changes to Provincial legislation which shifted a greater share of gross property

tax load from commercial property taxes to residential property taxes. In this report, when we state there has been no tax increase, we are referring to the gross tax revenues.

taxes from the commercial sector to the residential. If the City can not get the Province to change this legislation at this time, the City should find other ways of having businesses pay a greater share of municipal costs. Most residential tax payers are no better off than businesses, and no less able to bear the costs. There must be fairness.

- Make the Province pay 100% of mandated services
- Some participants proposed that development fees should be raised, and they should not be waived as frequently as has been happening.

Desire for an improved budget process in the future

Participants in several discussion groups were unhappy with this budget process and the nature of the consultations. Many were displeased with specific questions in the consultation. They felt there was inadequate information for people to participate in a meaningful way (even inaccurate or misleading information in some cases). The time period for input was extremely short. Residents could not get a sense of how either cuts or increased tax revenues would be applied. Many felt the process, including the Universal Program Review Process, was based on improper or false assumptions. There was substantial frustration with this budget being put before residents as a “crisis”, in isolation of past budget decisions which led to this situation (most notably, previous decisions not to raise taxes) and with no long term budget vision.

Many participants wanted to have ways to participate meaningfully in the budget process, and therefore, wanted a better process for future years.

What City services are most important to you and why?

a) People Services Most Important / Should Be Protected

Overwhelmingly, the services identified as "most important" in both consultations, and across the discussion groups, was "all of People Services". In almost all discussion groups, participants specifically identified there should be no cuts to People Services. A variety of reasons were given for this, with the same rationale coming up in several discussion groups, specifically:

- Quality of life is what attracts people and businesses to Ottawa and it is the People Services portfolio which provides that quality of life. Cuts here are not “savings”. The City needs to make its’ decisions with a clear long term view that funding recreation; quality neighbourhoods; community infrastructure to support vulnerable residents; preventive services; arts, culture and heritage is what will lead to economic growth by attracting businesses.
- The Ottawa 20/20 consultation process was very extensive and residents were extremely clear that quality of life and "a healthy, caring City" were highly valued, including neighbourhood services and vitality, support for the vulnerable, arts etc.
- Investment in the People Services portfolio gets the greatest value for the money. Minimal investment by the City leads to a significant leveraging of resources including money from other governments and volunteers. Conversely, a cut to these services will lead to a related loss of these additional resources, i.e. reduction in the volunteer base and loss of revenues from senior levels of government. These contributions are an economic

asset to the City, but is not measured in the same way and not factored into this budget exercise.

- The volunteer base is stretched to the limit and will deteriorate if there are more cuts. The services that are funded by People Services are stretched to the limit and have already disproportionately borne the burden of successive years of cost cutting processes, downloading, and tax freezes. Many felt increases in these services were needed.
- The budget should not be balanced "on the backs" of the most vulnerable, specifically people with disabilities, low income residents, families and youth, members of diverse communities, vulnerable seniors. People Services deals with basic needs.
- There is ample evidence that preventive measures are more cost effective in the long run, i.e. community supports, recreation, community responses to youth alienation, preventive and community health services, etc. The People Services portfolio funds many of the preventive services.
- People Services helps everyone and touches all organizations.
- The City is growing and the services need to grow to be accessible in the local communities (e.g. community centres, community spirit organizations, etc.) This builds healthy communities / neighbourhoods.
- Community funding is a cost effective way to deliver services, as the local people and organizations understand best what is needed in local communities.

One group was uncomfortable putting People Services as a priority but felt People Services as a block should be protected.

A few participants in the two consultations felt there was room for efficiencies or some cuts in People Services, particularly with respect to the bureaucracy related to People Services. A few felt some of the larger agencies could withstand some reductions. Some participants in one group felt all services which were contracted to organizations should be reviewed for efficiency, cost-effectiveness and their ability to make a difference in the community. A few believed there could be some efficiencies found by privatizing some services under People Services or by making partnerships to streamline services. Others felt there could be re-allocation within the People Services portfolio, between sub-departments. Some participants recognized cost recovery had to be looked at, but there were differing views on where that was appropriate.

Some specific services or resources within People Services were identified as particularly important by one or more participant, specifically:

- Childcare
- Long term care
- Emergency shelters and services for people at risk of homelessness
- Social services and health care
- Senior services
- Libraries and bookmobile services
- Financial services and supports for the financially vulnerable
- Public health, health promotion, preventative health services and health care (but not "social engineering" initiatives by the health department)
- Day programs for marginalized residents
- Services around food and nutrition including community kitchens

- Employment assistance
- The service delivery model of the community health centres
- Heritage
- Dental care
- Recreation and recreation subsidies
- Housing
- Supports for newcomers and other vulnerable communities
- Knowledgeable City employees to leverage resources and inform residents
- Community centres
- Short term grants to small groups, as they are very vulnerable
- Parks and wading pools
- Staffing to implement the City's Accessibility Plan

b) Emergency and Protective Services

Next to People Services, "Emergency and Protective Services" was most commonly identified as important to participants. They identified support for a strong emergency preparedness and response system as a key factor in the high quality of life in the City. Concern was raised with respect to inadequate paramedic services in the rural areas. Some wanted to see no cuts to fire services.

A significant number of people felt that:

- Within Emergency and Protective Services, the fire and ambulance services were most important, and the police services could be reduced;
- the City (bureaucracy and population) makes too much inappropriate use of police as a way to respond to community issues (e.g. youth) when evidence has demonstrated there are much cheaper and more effective ways to address community issues.
- Part of the police budget could be diverted to People Services for community and preventive services, and this would be more cost effective.

Many felt People Services and Emergency Services are inter-related. Cuts in one would lead to increased needs and costs in the other.

c) Transportation

Several participants in both consultations identified transportation as a priority, specifically public transportation and ParaTranspo. This was identified as the backbone to a working city and important for ecological reasons.

One group identified transportation infrastructure which supports private cars as a low priority.

d) Arts

Some participants stressed the importance of the arts, for the quality of life in the City as identified in the Ottawa 20/20 exercise, and as an amenity which contributes to the economic vitality by attracting people and businesses to the City.

e) Infrastructure including safe water / sanitary / sewage

Some participants identified basic infrastructure, including safe water and sewage systems as an important component of the infrastructure of the City.

One participant identified services leading to sustainable environments, as a priority. This would fall under several categories such as public transportation, neighbourhood services, etc.

Another participant felt the City's website was excellent.

Frustration regarding prioritizing

Several participants were frustrated with being asked at these consultations to prioritize services. For some, their anger was they had voted for a 9% tax increase in order that there would be no cuts. Many felt this was a divisive exercise in the community. Others identified that not all people are well informed or can be unbiased, and their choices might be based on their own position, age, etc. rather than on a comprehensive understanding of the needs in the community. Some participants would not prioritize services, and of those, some discussed principles which could be applied by decision makers in making judgements.

Principles regarding cuts: Base decisions on proper information and evidence

In several discussion groups, participants identified some principles which could guide decision makers with respect to making cuts, specifically:

- Make cost cutting decisions based on solid information about what would be best for the city and it's residents, not based on political expediency.
- The City should use a longer term framework than the 2004 budget. Specifically, there should be an understanding of how a cut in 2004 would impact in several years. This was identified as particularly the case for preventative, public and community health, and community services for vulnerable populations including recreation, in which cuts today would lead to increased costs in future years.
- Make cuts fairly. Don't just cut whole groups or services. Recognize that a percentage cut does not have the same effect on all services, as some services or departments can absorb a percentage reduction (roads was one example given), while others cannot (e.g. childcare). Recognize that serious underfunding can be as damaging as cutting completely.
- Review all services and expenditures, including purchase of services and identify where services can be provided more economically than now.
- Don't make cuts where irreparable damage will be done, specifically heritage (artifacts will be lost), community services (will damage the volunteer base), and supports to viable neighbourhoods.
- Preserve and prioritize preventative measures, which are cheaper in the short and long term.
- Cuts should not be made in such a way that they lead to further marginalization in the community, of youth, people with disabilities, members of diverse communities, rural residents, seniors, low income residents.
- Cuts should not be made where the City money is used to leverage funding from other sources (especially senior levels of government) or substantial volunteer contributions.

- It is cheaper for the City to partner with the community organizations than to deliver services any other way.

What is your main concern about a reduction to funding for services?

“Cuts in People Services will tear apart the social structure of the City.”
A participant, January 17, 2004

Deterioration in the quality of life

The primary concern expressed in the discussion groups was a deterioration in the high quality of life in Ottawa, which would have an impact on citizens across the board irrespective of their circumstances, and on how attractive the City was for business investment.

Disproportionate Impact on the Vulnerable

A second primary theme was that a decrease in the quality of life would disproportionately affect the more vulnerable and marginalized residents in the City. A common concern was the likelihood that increased stresses in the community (due to cuts) would lead to an increase in demand for more costly emergency and protective services (e.g. more crime, leading to more police intervention, etc.)

Many participants re-iterated points made by others above, specifically

- Services and programs funded under People Services cannot sustain any more cutting. The voluntary sector is already at serious risk and fragile.
- Cuts in People Services would be short sighted and lead to higher expenditures later for health, emergency and protective services.
- Residents' standard of living will decrease, especially for seniors
- Cuts in People Services would have a disproportionate impact because these services, with City money, leverage significant additional resources for the City, specifically funding from senior government and volunteer resources. This adds a lot of economic value which is not accounted for in the City budget.
- The City cannot pull back from necessities, for individuals, families or communities or we will see these social structures fall apart as individuals and neighbourhoods are more stressed.
- Cuts in People Services would affect the residents least able to deal with the impacts, i.e. the most vulnerable.

In addition, the following concerns were raised by one or more participants:

- Cost cutting decisions will be made for political reasons, not based on solid information about what would be best for the city and it's residents
- All or some cuts may be artificial, that is, may not actually be needed
- The decision-makers will not see relationships between services, that is, that cutting one service will result in increased usage of other services and that more cost to the city would be the result
- There is a risk of stigma for people who cannot pay in a user system
- It will be more costly to rebuild services if they are cut

- It is necessary to know what services are of most value, based on fact and evidence, not based on people's biases or uninformed opinions
- Cuts under a main service area will not likely be managed precisely enough to be properly applied with the sub-services of that main service area. Even with the correct information and the correct intentions / criteria, the implementation of the cuts would likely be made improperly and would not reflect the intended goal.
- Cuts to emergency dental services will have adverse health effects on the vulnerable
- Cuts to library services will have a negative impact on the education of those who can least afford it, leading to more costly problems in the future
- Cuts to heritage would lead to irrecoverable losses (e.g. loss of artifacts)
- Cuts in the Housing Department will put more people at risk
- There is already a decline in public health services and that will have longer term and more expensive consequences
- In the current climate, staff are given no security and working conditions are unstable. This is not right.
- Heritage is vital for the health and identity of the community. Once it is lost (artifacts, collective memory, infrastructure) it can never be recovered
- More costs in community and neighbourhood services will do irreparable damage to neighbourhoods. Need to preserve those services which build community, belonging, cohesiveness and the volunteer base
- The francophone milieu (services and community) have already faced cuts and can't cope with any more
- Who will pick up the pieces: United Way, the faith groups?

How would you rate each service priority using a scale of "high", "medium", or "low".

Frustration with the priority rating process

At both consultations, and within all the discussion groups, there was a high degree of frustration with the request to specifically rate services against each other. The majority stressed they had voted for a tax increase because they felt all the services should be maintained. Some felt this was an even further move to "divide and conquer" the community. Others felt it was a meaningless question. There was substantial cynicism that most of the decisions had already been made or that decisions still to be made would be based on political considerations not what was best for the community as a whole. Many identified it would be more useful to break down the main headings (e.g. Emergency and Protective Services, People Services) into their component parts, but that such an exercise was impractical in a couple of hours. Such specific decisions should be made, based on complete and specific background information, which was not possible, even within the extensive Universal Program Review document.

Three discussion groups would not rank services against each other. Instead, some of them offered principles to be used by decision makers in rating services. These principles (and principles offered by the other five groups) were quite similar to those proposed by various participants as a criteria with respect to making cuts, specifically:

- Use the Ottawa 20/20 principles as they reflect what Ottawa residents want.
- A guiding principle for ranking services should be support for the vulnerable
- An additional guiding principle (to those offered under the earlier questions) should be protecting public safety and public health
- Do not make cuts that will lead to irreparable or irreplaceable losses
- Prioritize prevention rather than intervention
- Identify efficiencies (and inefficiencies)

One participant proposed the principles to make specific recommendations should be individual responsibility, ownership, involvement and commitment.

The five discussion groups which did undertake a ranking exercise, did so on the understanding that the combined responses of the discussion groups would not be used as a "referendum", but rather as a further general indication of what the participants particularly valued in the City. This is particularly the case, since each group ranked the priorities they themselves had listed in the earlier discussion, rather than a set list of priorities. The exercise confirmed:

- People Services (the entire portfolio including arts and heritage) was overwhelmingly stressed as a high priority across all groups who ranked services.
- Emergency and Protective Services were a significant priority, although not nearly as high as People Services
- Transportation and Public Works were a significant priority
- Development and Corporate Services was considered a low priority by all groups who ranked services.

What services are you prepared to decrease in order to preserve your high priority services?

"Wasteful bureaucracy is taking away from necessary funding to more social programs. Cut the wasteful bureaucracy, not the services."

A participant. Januarv 17. 2004

Once again, many participants were upset by this question, as they stressed they had voted for a tax increase in order that no services would be cut. When pressed, all groups identified some areas where they were prepared to see decreases.

If cuts must be made, decrease Development and Corporate Services

Overwhelmingly, a majority of the discussion groups at both consultations indicated there should be decreases in Developmental and Corporate Services and City administration (in particular legal fees, top heavy administration, and excessive marketing were mentioned).

"It should be "Universal Efficiency Mandate" rather than "Universal Program Review".

Participant, Jan. 17, 2004

Reduce Waste and Inefficiency

A very common theme in most discussion groups was the desire to see a decrease in inefficiencies and waste, particularly in Corporate Services, Transportation and Public Utilities, Emergency and Protective Services. A number of concrete examples were offered, such as:

- Multiple City inspectors (such as by-law enforcement, fire, etc.) each conducting regular (e.g. annual) inspections of one establishment such as a corner store, where one inspector could be used
- An inflated police budget because of over-use of police to respond to community issues (for example, alienated youth) and because the emergency services are based on community perceptions of safety rather than evidence of what leads to increased public security (visibility versus effectiveness)
- Inefficiencies in the public transit system
- 20/20 consultation was costly, gave clear direction, but now more money is being spent to do it over again in the context of the budget
- Too many layers to get approvals from Development Services
- The bureaucracy is too top-heavy, with too much decision-making centralized at the top. It is more cost effective to delegate authority to lower level managers rather than paying for managers to manage managers
- Contracting out by the City, which commonly is more expensive than doing the work in-house
- Build in evaluation to initiatives that shift responsibility from the City to volunteer/community organizations to identify hidden costs
- Lights on in the local community centre even if there is nothing going on

A minority felt there were inefficiencies and waste in People Services. Some felt fees could be charged for some services, for example, increased library fees.

Many participants wanted to see cuts in the following areas:

- severance settlements, bonuses, buy-out packages
- legal fees and legal actions
- public information and public consultation (City could be much more cost-effective than at present)
- use of consultants (i.e. have less use of consultants)
- staffing, salary levels and pensions in the City, especially among senior staff
- capital expenditures for roads, with the cuts being put toward public transit
- other capital expenditures, and make better use of existing facilities
- subsidies to the commercial sector (as calculated by the difference between the property taxes they pay, and the value of the City services they receive) and direct subsidies / tax breaks (such as to professional sports teams)

In the footnotes we list specific services which were identified for cuts by one participant only.⁴

One or more participants identified specific concerns related to expected cost-cutting, specifically,:

- that the rural areas would suffer disproportionately from cuts which the City would make, and in particular, the already spotty paramedic, fire and police services would be reduced;
- that community organizations which would be facing a cut should be specifically notified so there was transparency and to ensure they understood what was happening.

Several participants felt services could be delivered more cost effectively by community groups, for example:

- Community based services with some City money can leverage that contribution through volunteers and funding from other sources
- Community organizations know how to deliver cost effective services
- Sports associations could invest in basic maintenance collectively (through money or volunteering) instead of imposing individual user fees to help pay for maintenance

Two participants felt community members needed to take more responsibility to reduce and repair damage and vandalism of public property.

⁴ 211, forestry services, parking services and collection, cultural activities, rinks, parks, community centres that are under-used, lower standard of maintenance on roads and sidewalks, cut the grass less frequently in parks etc., less frequent routes on some public transit runs, reduced public transit outside the Greenbelt, collect garbage differently (e.g. in a communal location), employee benefits like parking and transportation.

Recommendations from the Discussion Groups

1. All discussion groups recommended a tax increase to preserve services and quality of life. All recommended an increase of at least 3%. 67% voted for an increase of 8% or higher. 51% voted for an increase of 9.7%. (In a minority of cases, there was a dissenting opinion by a participant. One individual in each consultation did not want a tax increase, largely due to concerns about current waste and inefficiencies. One participant called for an increase above 9.7%.)

"I don't have a problem with an increase in taxes, but I want to know exactly what a 9.7% increase is going to cover. I do see a lot of waste in the City of Ottawa."

*A participant,
Jan. 17, 2004*

2. Almost all discussion groups recommended that People Services not face cuts. All groups but one ranked People Services as the highest priority among all City services. The group which did not rank it highest, was not comfortable ranking the services against each other, but recommended People Services be financially protected.
3. All discussion groups also identified the need to find greater efficiencies and to eliminate waste at the City, especially within the large departments (Transportation and Public Utilities, Emergency and Protective Services). (Please see the specific suggestions in the body of the text. For many participants this included re-evaluating City management and infrastructure.

"Within the context of maximum efficiency and eliminating waste in the system, communicate back to me what my increase is going for."

A participant. Jan. 17. 2004

The following recommendations were made by more than one of the discussion groups:

4. Look back to the Ottawa 20/20 principles and find a way in the budget to pay for what Ottawa citizens said they want and value.
5. Clarify what the City means by a "tax increase" in its' educational material with respect to the 2004 Budget. Residents are not clear if the proposed scenarios are for an increase in the mill rate or the gross tax revenue.
6. Communicate clearly to the community on how any tax increase will be spent.
7. Any tax increase should be in the context of a longer term budgetary cycle that reflects long-term financial planning.
8. There should be regular tax increases to reflect the cost of living. This is proper planning and financial management.
9. If cuts are made, Corporate Services spending (esp. legal fees, bonuses and buy-outs) is the department where it should start.

10. Don't cut programs that are providing volunteer assistance or are leveraging money from the provincial and federal government. Priority should be given to those services which receive a bit of money from the city, but leverage that into a much greater return for the City. Most of these services are in the People Services portfolio, including arts and heritage.
11. Examine what the City is getting for the resources it is putting into a department and into services (with respect to cost-sharing and cost-effectiveness). Residents want services, but they want them properly set up and efficient.
12. Prioritize preventive measures, particular community services, as they work better and are more cost effective in the long run.
13. Protect programs (some groups recommended an increase) that protect the underprivileged.
14. Put in place a more meaningful participatory budget process for future years which has better information and assumptions, is based on evidence of what is effective, has more realistic timelines for input, looks at budgeting over a 4 - 5 year period and is not so flawed by political considerations.
15. Work more co-operatively and transparently with community agencies and organizations. Recognize their true value and impact. Explore more deeply the impact of potential cuts on individual agencies and consult with specific organizations which are facing cuts in order that they clearly understand what is happening.
16. Find ways to have businesses pay their fair share, if not through a revised tax structure (Provincial jurisdiction) then through other means.
17. The City needs to press with other municipalities for an overhaul of the property tax system, to achieve more fairness (especially with respect to the unfair burden borne by residential taxpayers in relation to commercial taxpayers.)
18. The City needs to find ways to raise revenues (which is what the non-profit sector has to do), for example, City be strategic about funding services which will leverage other resources.
19. The City needs to work with other municipalities to get increased revenues from the Federal government through the so-called "New Deal for Cities", and to get the Province to pay a larger share of municipal services.

The following recommendations were made by one discussion group.

20. Reduce costs related to bonuses, staff settlements, staff buy-outs.
21. Hold back on capital expenditures for roads and increase funding to public transit.
22. Establish a differential tax structure for the urban and rural areas to reflect the different levels of service available.

23. Hold services in place, then incrementally address shortfall over the next few years (to maintain services). It is more difficult to re-establish services once they have been dismantled.
24. Savings from “eliminating waste and inefficiencies” should be re-invested in People Services.
25. Health promotion, prevention, and the unique model of service delivery through the network of community resource centres were all identified as very important areas to preserve and / or grow.
26. Make less use of consultants.
27. Do not contract out work, as it is more expensive in the long run.
28. Establish better contracts with City staff to have greater clarity (re roles and performance expectations) which will lead to better service for the public.
29. Determine if the City is picking up the tab for expenses that aren't their responsibility.
30. Look at alternative service delivery options.
31. Get the younger generation as involved as possible, as they will be taking over in the future. Also value young City workers.
32. The City should prepare a transparent accounting of the financial impact of amalgamation.
33. Find a way to distribute funds more equitable