

# Report on Bay Ward Public Consultation Meeting re. draft 2009 City Budget

(Tuesday Nov. 18/08, at 7 pm, at the Ron Kolbus-Lakeside Centre)

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Some 125 people attended the November 18, 2008 Bay Ward public consultation meeting regarding the City of Ottawa's draft 2009 budget, starting at 7 pm at the Ron Kolbus-Lakeside Centre. Councillor Alex Cullen provided a 20-minute presentation on the budget challenges facing City Council (to access this PowerPoint presentation, go to [www.alexcullen.ca](http://www.alexcullen.ca)) as well as distributing budget material. In his presentation Councillor Cullen outlined the basic format and components of the City's budget, the additional cost pressures and off-sets leading to this year's budget challenge, the proposal for a 4.9% property tax increase (worth \$148 on the average home assessed at \$279,000) combined with the need to find \$35 million in cuts to services in order to balance the City's budget.

20 residents then took to the microphone to comment and/or ask questions. Among the comments made were:

- Public transit should not be cut (specific references to routes 18, 151) (*frequently mentioned!*)
- Cut to outdoor rink program not acceptable (*frequently mentioned!*)
- Do not support cuts to festivals, museums, culture (*frequently mentioned!*)
- Public housing should not be cut (i.e. to rent supplements)
- The 2009 budget should reflect the recently adopted City Cycling Plan
- The property tax system should be reformed and provincial programs uploaded back to the Province
- Heritage programs are highly leveraged (City investment attracts other funding) and effective
- City Council commitment to add francophone child care spaces to rebalance the system to better reflect community needs should be honoured
- The 2% tax levy to contribute funds for infrastructure re-investment a good idea (part of the proposed 4.9% property tax increase)
- Proposed increase in sports fields rental fees too high
- Important to link good recreation with good social policy (i.e. crime prevention)
- Desire for City of Ottawa to examine triple-bottomline budgeting (i.e. economic, social, environment – used in Calgary)
- Cap to student age for bus pass opposed
- Cuts to child care spaces opposed
- Need to catch-up on previous 0% tax increases – creates deficit in dealing with inflation,
- Concerned about proposed cuts to long term care
- Concerned about impact of proposed wage freeze

No support was given to any of the proposed budget cuts; most attendees were opposed to the proposed budget cuts at this meeting.

Councillor Cullen closed the meeting by thanking participants for their interest, and outlining the City's budget public participation process, with public hearings on December 1, 2 and 3 at City Hall, and the Council budget meetings on December 4 and 5, and urged citizens to make their views known to City Council.