



Council Briefing Notes

Brought to you by CUPE Local 79

Community Development and Recreation Committee, April 13th, 2017

CUPE Local 79 represents around 20,000 workers at the City of Toronto. The Local is pleased to provide brief submissions and recommendations on the following items to be considered by Committee:

CDRC 19.2 Toronto's Child Care Growth Strategy

CDRC 19.3 The City's Position on Provincial Income Security Reform and Basic Income

CDRC 19.11 Service Level Impact of the 2017 Service Adjustments to Shelter, Support and Housing Administration

Re: CDRC 19.2 Toronto's Child Care Growth Strategy

CUPE Local 79 respectfully recommends the Committee and City Council:

- Adopt Toronto's Licensed Child Care Growth Strategy.
- Prioritize funding for its Child Care Growth Strategy as part of its long-term financial plan.
- Work with BILD Toronto to identify opportunities for future growth/ locations of child care centres.
- Request the Province review guidelines on how municipal child care fees are established to improve affordability and reduce pressure on any one jurisdiction.
- Move ahead on its promise to implement a job quality assessment tool.
- Re-affirm its support for a \$15 minimum wage as part of its tri-government strategy meetings.

Toronto's Child Care Growth Strategy is an ambitious and comprehensive vision that will increase service provision to 50% of children under the age of 4 by 2026, and increase child care accessibility and affordability by reducing parent fees by 25% to 40%. This vision is also costly, relying heavily on yet-to-be determined funding from all orders of government. Until the City determines what Provincial and Federal funding is forthcoming, there are actions it can take to support its vision now.

The City needs to start planning now by including the Child Care Growth Strategy as a priority in its long-term financial plan. With a projected addition of 30,000 spaces the City should also look at its own

physical and social infrastructure to create these spaces, as well as leveraging growth opportunities in new land developments.

The City's growth strategy also puts specific pressures on Toronto's child care system and its workers. If Toronto decreases parent fees, as it should, it will put pressure on Toronto child care centres from other jurisdictions where there is no control or cap on fees. Similarly, to prevent downward pressure on salaries and programs as a result of increasing affordability, the City needs to reaffirm its commitment to implement a job quality assessment tool and fair wages with paid sick days and benefits for part-time workers.

Re: CDRC 19.3 The City's Position on Provincial Income Security Reform and Basic Income

CUPE Local 79 respectfully recommends the Committee and City Council:

- Strongly oppose the Provincial decision to implement a basic income pilot, recognizing that basic income schemes threaten to reduce or eliminate the non-income supports and services that accompany Ontario Works and Ontario Disability Support Program.
- Call on the Province to immediately improve the lives of Ontarians experiencing poverty by increasing Ontario Works and Ontario Disability Support Program rates.
- Call on the Province to take immediate steps to improve the working conditions of precariously employed Ontarians through a \$15 minimum wage, guaranteed hours for part-time staff, and access to benefits including sick days.
- Work with the Province to improve access to the non-income supports provided to low-income Ontarians, recognizing that such supports are essential to escaping poverty.
- Move ahead with implementing a Job Quality Assessment Tool to provide a benchmark for good, stable jobs.

In January of this year, Local 79 discussed basic income and other issues with over 440 members through "Lunch and Learn" events at 13 Toronto Employment and Social Services (TESS) workplaces across the city. In addition, 147 members provided their input through an online survey. Through this consultation, our members expressed two dominant concerns about basic income schemes:

- If a basic income scheme reduces non-financial supports, it will negatively affect people experiencing poverty.
- Basic income schemes fail to address fundamental issues related to poverty (in individuals' lives and in terms of larger economic and social realities).

The Staff Report for CD 19.3 provides a robust discussion of the growing impact of precarious employment on working Ontarians. Improved access to income support programs is part of addressing this problem.

However, Local 79, the broader labour movement, and numerous independent analysts argue that basic income merely allows employers to continue making work more precarious and less stable. Basic income is a red herring in the world of poverty reduction. Meaningful outcomes can be more directly achieved through:

- Increased benefits rates.
- Expanded access to non-income supports related to employment, health, housing and other areas.
- Implementation of a \$15 per hour minimum wage.
- Amend employment legislation to provide guaranteed hours, predictable scheduling and benefits including sick days.

We encourage Councillors to read Local 79's full submission to the Province's Basic Income Pilot consultation at <http://www.cupelocal79.org/2017/02/local-79-responds-to-the-provinces-pilot-project-on-basic-income/>.

At our 'Lunch and Learn' sessions, we asked members what additional supports are needed, besides a basic income, to help people get out of poverty. Here are some examples of what they told us.

- Referrals to specialty agencies
- Transportation
- Specialty services for the disabled
- Child care
- Health care
- Housing support
- Employment support
- Language training
- Settlement services
- Recreational programs
- Legal services
- Transitional Child Benefits
- Funeral planning
- Crisis intervention
- Life skills support
- Access and referrals to Pardons

Public services support individuals as complex, whole people with a range of familial and community attachments and responsibilities.

Re: CDRC 19.11 Service Level Impact of the 2017 Service Adjustments to Shelter, Support and Housing Administration

CUPE Local 79 respectfully recommends the Committee and City Council:

- Support the staff recommended actions to reverse the budget cuts and maintain the 10.3 frontline staff positions that were scheduled for elimination.
- Develop and implement an action plan that requires opening of emergency shelters when there is a documented surge in demand. This plan should be implemented when occupancy of shelters, the Out of the Cold program, overnight drop-ins and emergency programs, exceeds 90% of available shelter beds.
- Direct staff to come forward with a long-term sustainable plan for staffing in shelters that properly delivers the wrap-around services and supports the homeless need to get housed. As part of that plan, ensure staff vacancy levels do not go above 2.5%.
- Direct staff to consult with emergency shelter providers such as out of the cold, drop-in program

providers, as well as Local 79 and its front-line shelter workers, as part of the system-wide assessment planned as preparation for the 2018 budget process.

The deletion of 10.3 frontline shelter staff put forward in the 2017 operating budget threatens services in shelters at a time when the system is facing pressure from increased demand. It also exacerbates staff shortages and workload challenges already experienced in SSHA. Local 79 is relieved that the staff report is recommending reversing the reduction of these positions, but we are concerned that it come at the cost of staff vacancies elsewhere in the division which will weaken the shelter system overall. SSHA needs a long-term and sustainable plan to provide shelter and housing services at the level and standard that meets the needs of our most vulnerable residents.

Over the last few years, the allowed staff gapping rate - the percentage of vacant positions the Division is allowed to have - has grown from around 2.5% to 3.6%. As of September 2016, the actual vacancy rate was 6.1%, which means there are over 46 workers missing from the Division's services. Unsustainable workloads are becoming a serious issue among our workers at SSHA. Local 79 is seeing an increase in temporary contracts and part-time last minute shift work in the place of filling vacancies or creating permanent positions in the Division. Workers in SSHA face significant stress from the work they do serving Toronto's most vulnerable residents, and this stress is compounded by unstable working conditions and unmanageable workloads.

It has been common knowledge for years that Toronto's shelter system is not reliably meeting surges in demand. The Staff report before the CDRC states that the City is undertaking an assessment of all program areas as part of the 2018 budget process. We request that City Council direct staff to make the following elements part of that assessment and the Division's 2018 budget submission:

- An action plan to open emergency shelters when there is a surge in demand that pushes occupancy above 90% of available shelter beds.
- A long-term sustainable plan for proper staffing of shelters and the wrap-around services that help house the homeless.

We also ask that CDRC direct staff to undertake meaningful consultation with Local 79 and its SSHA workers, as well as shelter and drop-in program providers, as it assesses the system in preparation for the 2018 budget.

For more information, please contact:
Katrina Miller
Strategic Communications and Campaigns, CUPE Local 79
647-272-5024