

January 10, 2017

Good morning,

My name is Samantha Green. I am a family physician at St. Michael's Hospital and with the group Inner City Health Associates. I work primarily with patients affected by poverty in the downtown east. I am also the Chair of the organization Health Providers Against Poverty. I am here today in solidarity with my patients, who will be directly and deeply affected by the proposed budget cuts to affordable housing, shelters, and community services.

I have been seeing Amy and her 6-year-old son Joshua for over a year in my regular family practice. Amy works part-time as a receptionist and is also currently on Ontario Works. Amy and Josh live together in a market-rent bachelor apartment. All Josh asked for for Christmas was his own room. The two of them benefit tremendously from free city library and recreation services that allow them to spend time together outside their apartment. Josh benefits from a school nutrition program. Amy and Josh will suffer tremendously if services are cut or if user fees are introduced. And Amy and Josh already struggle because of inadequate investment in social housing.

David is a 71 year old man with worsening dementia who I met in a shelter. He is homeless and has been in and out of Toronto shelters for many years. He has difficulty remembering to take his blood pressure and diabetes medications, so both conditions have been running out of control. Unfortunately, he has in fact recently had to undergo an amputation because of a foot infection related to his uncontrolled diabetes. Fortunately, he has more recently connected with a case manager in a more intensive transitional housing program at one of the City's shelters, and has been able to take his medications more regularly and get on a list for appropriate housing. David would suffer if this program were cut.

Supporting housing means supporting a healthy city. Research from Toronto has proven that access to housing leads to improved health, particularly for folks with mental illness and addiction. Providing accessible recreation and community services leads to improved physical and mental health for all our citizens. Moreover, Toronto's reputation as a welcoming, world class city depends on our support for our most vulnerable.

This City Council cares about poverty reduction. In November 2015, only a year ago, the Mayor and Toronto City Council unanimously adopted TOProsperity, a strong plan for poverty reduction in Toronto. With this budget you have the opportunity to invest in this plan. Instead, this budget cuts frontline community services and shelter services.

This City also cares about poverty reduction. Torontonians currently pay the lowest property tax of any city in Ontario and most would be willing to pay more to help our most marginalized neighbours.

Thank you for your time.