

Deputation to Budget Committee of Council

December 7, 2011

Presented by Elisha Corbin- Param, St. Stephen's Community House

Hi my name is Elisha Param and I'm here on behalf of the 1200 youth who use St. Stephen Youth Arcade every year. I could speak from experience on the help and love that St. Stephen's gives to the youth that attend the centre. A lot of youth go through certain experiences in their life that causes them to spiral downwards unless they get that little extra help that the Youth Arcade gives.

They have multiple job and volunteer opportunities for people who are looking for a positive change in their life. The after school drop in is a safe space for youth to hang out and learn instead of being out on the street and causing trouble. They offer a lot of groups and workshops for youth to learn how to communicate, understand and build bridges. The staff give us chances to grow and develop our skills; they don't give up on people.

We are worried about the plan for the budget which includes a cut of 9.8 % out of the Community Partnership and Initiative Program. The Community Services Partnership grant pays for staffing our lunch time and after school drop-in. Without this funding the Arcade may have to close the drop-in earlier or on certain days. We also have received Drug Prevention, AIDS Prevention, Access and Equity and Community Safety Initiative grants in the past for activities like our Boundless Adventures Wilderness trips, our mentoring program, recreation and arts programming and anti-violence workshops.

Councillors, you'll remember that one of our after school groups, the Gentlemen's Spot for young men won a Mayor's Safety Award this year, so you know how important these programs are.

Community grants keep the doors of the Youth Arcade open and other City grants help make sure the programs are exciting and interesting for youth and keep them coming through the doors. We do receive some funding from the province and donations, but we can't get those grants if we don't show that the City also provides support for our programs.

St. Stephen's is like a home to a lot of the youth that come here, a lot of us depend on St. Stephen's to get by on day to day life. I know I did. It's hard to explain what St. Stephens Youth Arcade means to the youth in the community, but just know that we need it. I am here to ask you to please make these grants a priority in your budget and not to cut them. You can bring back the vehicle tax or use the surplus to save community grants.

Thank you for the opportunity.