

St. Stephen's Community House
Deputation to the Budget Committee, City of Toronto
March 2, 2010

Presented by Kalale Dalton

Good afternoon. My name is Kalale Dalton and I am a member of the St. Stephen's Community House Youth Arcade. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak to you today on behalf of St. Stephen's about the 2010 City Operating Budget.

St. Stephen's receives funding for the Youth Arcade through the Community Service Partnership and the Major Recreation Partnership. For the past two years we have had a 2% increase on these grants and that has been a great help. We have learned that there will not be an increase this year, if this budget passes.

The cost of running the Arcade increases by about 2% each year for staffing, maintenance, utilities, and supplies - all those things we need to keep the doors open. When we don't receive this increase every year, we have to find savings somewhere else.

One of the expenses that we may have to cut is the wages that St. Stephen's pays to Peer Youth Workers like me.

Throughout the six years that I have been apart of St Stephen's Youth Arcade, I have had many peer leader experiences. I have been fortunate enough to be positively influenced by countless other peer leaders over the years and then I became a peer leader. The nurturing environment that The Youth Arcade provides allowed my first working experience to be rich and supportive.

I gained so many valuable life skills and the confidence to teach other young people. I am one of ten peer leaders that work to help lead creative social programs. The peer leaders lead the snack program, community vitalization projects, fitness programs; write books, design drug and alcohol prevention programs, and creative arts programs.

I believe that because of these programs younger youth are able to have positive role models to look up to in the community. The peer leaders build strong connections to the younger youth in the neighborhood, as well as build allies for when they enter high school.

All round the Peer Leaders hugely benefit The Youth Arcade and the success of their programs. Again, thank you very much for listening to me today - and please remember how important that small increase is to us when you make your budget decisions.