

February 22, 2001

Notice of Motion
Toronto City Council

Abandon Toronto's 2008 Olympic Bid

WHEREAS, the recent disclosure of the City of Toronto's financial predicament (an expected budget deficit of \$305 million this year alone,) and its potential to impact on the lives of 2.6 million Torontonians compels members of City Council to consider the needs of their constituents and re-evaluate priorities within their communities and throughout the City as a whole; and,

WHEREAS, the depth of the spending cuts required to make up a \$305 million budget short-fall are so substantial that even our most fundamental quality of life services have been targeted for devastating cutbacks - everything from local libraries to breakfast programs for kids to our renowned Public Health Department which has been recognized as a hallmark of Toronto's civility and greatness for over a century; and,

WHEREAS, the Chief Financial Officer has stated publicly that the City's current financial situation is not sustainable; and,

WHEREAS, during its last term, Toronto City Council approved proposals for several mega-projects including the 2008 Olympic Bid and the Waterfront Re-Development Initiative, both of which require the involvement of huge amounts of public money, public land and/or public resources; and,

WHEREAS, for the last three years members of City Council were largely unaware of the magnitude of the impending budget crisis and therefore did not/could not consider the impacts that these mega-projects would have on diverting scarce public resources and attention away from the vital and innovative services that have made Toronto the best city in the world to live and work; and,

WHEREAS, despite Mayor Lastman's assurances to the contrary, a successful Olympics would require a considerable commitment of public resources - tax dollars, public land, and civil service staff - all of which are in very short supply in the City of Toronto now and for the foreseeable future; and

WHEREAS, despite being declared a number one priority in this City and a national emergency across the country, homelessness in Toronto continues to rapidly escalate; and,

WHEREAS, it is clear that the City of Toronto lacks the political power, the political will and now the financial resources to deal with any of these issues within the foreseeable future; and,

WHEREAS, it is a widely accepted fact that the Olympic Games and the preparation for those Games has widespread negative impacts on socially and economically disadvantaged citizens - increasing the population of homeless, driving up rents, disrupting services and drastically increasing the cost of living for ordinary citizens in this City; and,

WHEREAS, hosting the 2008 Olympics in Toronto will exacerbate these problems to a near insurmountable levels; and

WHEREAS, the current financial crisis has staff and politicians working diligently to squeeze every last nickel out of every program and service the City offers and which taxpayers have come to expect; and,

WHEREAS, throughout this exercise which extends to virtually every aspect of the City's budget, no consideration has yet been given to scaling back or holding off on any of the mega-projects approved in the last term of Council; and,

WHEREAS, despite Toronto's current budget crisis and earlier assurances that no public tax dollars would be spent on the Olympic Bid, Toronto City Council as late as its last meeting authorized an expenditure of \$3.45 million to pay for consultants and studies directly attributable to Olympic infrastructure requirements and Toronto's Olympic Bid and which are being carried out in accordance with Olympic deadlines; and,

WHEREAS, at a time when citizens are being told that the City can no longer afford to provide them with the services they have a right to expect, that they are going to have to pay more for less, and that we are in a financial crisis that is of everybody's making but our own, it is absolutely unconscionable that we would then turn around and offer to write a blank cheque to undertake a multi-billion dollar extravagance that we simply cannot afford.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT:

1. Toronto City Council notify the IOC of its intention to abandon the City of Toronto's bid for the 2008 Summer Olympic Games; and,
2. Toronto City Council devote all its energies to managing its current financial crisis with priority on preserving Toronto's social infrastructure and the quality of life for all its citizens.