

Budget approved: Toronto council saves firefighters, breakfast program and child care ^[1]

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EXCERPTS:

City councillors have approved a compromise operating budget for 2013 that reverses planned cuts to firefighting, student nutrition, child care and community grants.

Red-shirted firefighters cheered after council voted overwhelmingly to spend \$3.1 million to cancel the fire chief's plan to mothball five fire trucks and close a station on Runnymede Rd.

The council approved spending \$3.1 million for 83 firefighter positions and 15 fire prevention officers until July 1, pending the results of an efficiency study and an insurance underwriters' review.

"It's good news," said Ed Kennedy, president of the Toronto Professional Fire Fighters' Association, which had been accused of "muscling" councillors to stop the cuts.

In all, some \$12 million was added to the \$9.4 billion operating budget for the fire department and other services. However, a motion to add \$5 million for improved transit service was defeated.

The budget raises residential property taxes by 2 per cent.

Among the extra items council approved:

- \$1.163 million extra for student breakfast programs
- \$894,450 to cover inflation in community grants.
- \$3.8 million to fund fee subsidies for 264 child care spaces.

Consider moving \$6.8 million from the 2012 year end surplus to boost the social housing stabilization reserve.

"There were almost \$12 million of adds that were put back in the budget today," said Councillor Joe Mihevc, who had pushed to boost student nutrition funding.

"I think this makes for a more human budget, as well as a fiscally responsible budget. There were compromises all over the place."

Mayor Rob Ford's executive committee's united front of no spending beyond the \$7 million already added to the \$9.4-billion proposed 2013 budget splintered Tuesday. Some allies broke ranks in support of at least delaying controversial cuts mothballing five fire trucks and closing a station on Runnymede Rd., while others fumed.

When council resumes Wednesday, both the fire compromise and a separate move opposed by Ford, to add \$1.16 million to a student nutrition program, seem likely to have the support of a majority 23 councillors.

-reprinted from the Toronto Star

Region: Ontario ^[2]

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