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Mayor Sullivan and the NPA Cut CUPE 15 Jobs and Public Services

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- Editor

By Paul Faoro

The first statement I made to Mayor Sam Sullivan and Vancouver City Council at two different presentations over the last few weeks regarding the City's 2006 operating budget was that Council's final decisions will set the tone for our upcoming contract negotiations with the City.

The budget decisions made by Mayor Sullivan and his Non Partisan Association (NPA) Councillors on April 7th after a 20 hour meeting have clearly set a tone - a very troubling one. The NPA used their majority and eliminated over sixteen full time CUPE 15 positions and made serious cuts to public services from every area imaginable. Every citizen in Vancouver will feel these

significant cuts. They appear to be targeted at children, women, homeless people, seniors, people with disabilities and several ethnic communities. The arts community was also hit hard.

In a press release shortly after the 20 hour marathon Mayor Sullivan was claiming he has delivered an "accountable and balanced budget". Mayor Sullivan further boasts "I am proud that we have been able to balance fiscal and social responsibility, while ensuring that we are showing compassion for our citizens who are most in need".

The following is a short summary of the impact of the first NPA budget. They are:

-Cutting \$23,000 from the Emergency Preparedness Initiative. This initiative is in place to improve the City's level of preparedness to respond to a disaster.

-Discontinuing three multilingual phone lines at City Hall for the Punjabi, Spanish & Vietnamese communities.

-Cutting \$30,000 from the Carnegie Outreach Recovery Program. This program links street people to housing and addiction services. This cut will hurt the most vulnerable people.

-Cutting \$81,900 for a temporary staff position for the City Women's Task Force.

-Eliminating two working supervisor positions in Building Services. The loss of these CUPE 15 positions will impact the cleaning of City housing in the Downtown Eastside and will impact residents in City owned buildings.

-Eliminating the Child and Youth Advocate Program. This shameful cut will result in the loss of an advocacy role for child, youth and family issues.

-Cutting \$50,000 from the library books and materials budget. This cut will hurt the public.

-Eliminating one Seismic Specialist position in Community Services. This position was in place to mitigate seismic risks in unreinforced masonry buildings.

-Reducing \$100,000 from the Homeless Action Plan. This will delay the implementation of the evaluation of Vancouver's rental market.

-Eliminating one Animal Control Officer. Cutting this CUPE 15 position will jeopardize prompt response to complaints from the public and reduce revenue from written violations.

-Wiping out entire innovation grants. The \$100,000 targeted for innovation grants was to respond to one-time strategies to address

social problems and bring about positive social change.

-Eliminating one CUPE 15 clerical position in Community Services. This will increase the workload for other employees while adding to the unmanageable current workloads and cause service delays.

-Slashing \$75,000 from the Harm Reduction Conference. This will negatively impact this important conference.

-Reducing \$200,000 from the Engineering Community Climate Change Action Plan. This will reduce efforts to target specific activities negatively impacting our environment. One staff position will be eliminated.

-Eliminating one clerical position in Engineering. Cutting this front line CUPE 15 position will impact service to the public.

-Cutting one CUPE 15 Streets Design position in Engineering which will cause service delays.

-Cutting \$300,000 from cultural grants which will severely impact the arts community as grant money is leveraged.

-Cutting \$13,000 from other civic grants. This will impact the Wildlife Rescue Society, Celebration Grants and Rental Subsidy Grants.

-Cutting 1.7 full time employees from library staffing.

-Slashing \$140,000 from library programs.

-Slashing \$400,000 from the Park Board. This severe cut will impact service after 2006.

-Reducing the Anti-Graffiti program in the Park Board by \$13,000. This cut will cause longer cycles between inspection and cleaning and ultimately result in more graffiti in all Vancouver parks.

-Wiping out the Ethical Purchasing Program including one CUPE 15 position. This progressive program was saving money for the City and was implemented when the City found out the uniforms for Vancouver Firefighters were being made in Burma using child labour.

-Reducing Britannia Information Centre hours. This \$11,000 cut will reduce hours for CUPE 15 auxiliaries and will reduce

public service.

-Cutting outreach costs by \$12,000 in the City Clerks department. Funding was in place to deal with diversity, disability and seniors' issues. This cut will make it more difficult for groups to reach their mandates.

-Eliminating one System/Network Administrator, one Computer Programmer and one Network Support Specialist from Information Technology. Cutting these three CUPE 15 positions will negatively impact remaining staff.

-Cutting one CUPE 15 Planning Assistant II from City Plans in Community Services. This cut will reduce the division's ability to respond to citizen inquiries and the provision of planning services to neighborhoods.

-Eliminating one Planning Assistant II from Current Planning in Community Services. Cutting this CUPE 15 position will negatively impact development planners.

-Cutting the Food Policy Coordinator and the \$15,000 budget for the Food Policy Council. This regressive cut will set Vancouver backwards.

-Cutting one full time CUPE 15 position for cleaning services at City Hall. This will add to the existing rodent problem in City Hall and satellite offices. Offices will now only be cleaned every three days.

Balancing "social" responsibility - what a spin. This is the most regressive, hurtful City budget I have ever seen. Since being elected as President I have been advocating getting actively involved in the municipal elections to ensure that progressive candidates are elected. Mayor Sullivan's budget has been the best endorsement for this I have had to date.

Finally, with Mayor Sullivan's clear attack on CUPE 15 members we have no choice but to make job security the top priority for our upcoming contract negotiations. In light of the Mayor's and the NPA Councillors' actions we will elect our bargaining committee in early May and our committee needs to immediately gear up for a difficult round. We can serve notice to bargain as early as September 1st.