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Submission to the Annual Plan 2008

Thank you for allowing us to fax in our submission today. We tried to originally submit through your website service on 21 April, but it seems that even after 3 attempts, the text didn't seem to go through. There might be an issue with your online form on your website.

Also, we do not wish to speak to our submission.

Best regards

Christoph Henschl
Manager

St Albans Community Centre

03 3742467

Submission to the Draft Annual Plan

The St Albans Residents' Association would like to submit following comments to the Draft Annual Plan:

A) Proposed 24% increase in rent for Council tenants

1. At its meeting on March 27th the City Council resolved to increase rents for tenants in Council housing by 24%. We object strongly to an increase of this size.

2. We consider that the Council's recent decision should be set aside and that the rental income from housing should be that set out in the Draft Annual Plan 2008-09, page 29, where the budgeted total rents are stated as \$12.924m.

3. We understand that total rents of \$12.924m are an increase of about 2.5%. We do not object to such an increase because we recognise that costs for maintenance are increasing.

4. We object very strongly to the proposed increase of 24% because:

(i) Tenants, residents and ratepayers had no warning that the Council was considering an unprecedented rent increase until a day or two before the Council meeting on 27th March.

(ii) The Council's Social Housing Strategy (June 2007) did not indicate that the condition of the housing stock would require a huge rent increase within a year.

(iii) The Council's Long Term Community Plan 2006-2016 indicated rent increases of only about 2.5% a year.

(iv) Using rent from tenants to build a fund of \$34m by 2015 is a new policy on which people should be consulted, in accordance with the Local Government Act and the City Council's own policy.

5. We urge the Council to rescind its decision of March 27th to increase rents by 24% and to keep to the rental income set out in the Draft Annual Plan with a rent increase of about 2.5%.

B) Water

The availability of clean drinking water will be a big issue in future years. We feel that the council has some responsibility to provide tools to enable residents to monitor and modify their water usage behaviour.

We recommend that residents' water meters to be read at least once a quarter and notification sent out as of amount and low/medium/high usage. This is to enable residents to get an idea of their water usage and how they compare to the average usage per household in the city.

C) Submission Process and Draft Annual Plan

We have noticed that the Draft Annual Plan is very difficult to read for the average resident and for most representatives of community organisations. While the Draft Annual Plan in the current form provides a lot of detailed information, the average resident is virtually excluded from making any meaningful submissions because of the complexity of the document.

We would like to request that in addition to the detailed accounts, statistics and accounting and financial policies an easily readable introduction is provided. The document should be written in accessible language and should enable residents to get an overview, but also give them the opportunity to pinpoint specific issues of interest they might want to comment on.