



Social Planning Council *of Winnipeg*

est. 1919

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Presentation to Executive Policy Committee, July 15th, 2020

I am here today to speak in opposition to both the Grant Evaluation and Review Process Policy and the Service Delivery Responsibilities Report being passed or even considered today.

To begin with there seems to be a procedural matter. The Grant Evaluation and Review Process Policy appears on the agenda before the Service Delivery Report. Yet the former relies on the latter. That is, the Service Delivery Report is used as supporting documentation for the Grant Evaluation and Review Process Policy. The problem being is that the Service Delivery Report has not even been accepted as information yet much less adopted or approved by Council.

There is also a timing issue. Why now? The Service Delivery Report was begun to inform the multi-year budget process. Since that has been completed, why does this report need to go forward now? The public has been told time and again that we have a four year balanced budget. Admittedly, we are still looking for clarity on how deficits and surpluses will be dealt with but we are still told that the budget and forecasts will hold. So there is no need to rush either through.

Then there is the content of the Service Delivery Report which if used as support for the Grant Review Process, misinforms that process. The Service Delivery Report is contradictory in that in one section it says that pools, arenas and recreation centre maintenance is legislated but in another it says that the City has no legislated requirements to provide these services. It does the same with tree maintenance for example. I read that as there seems to be a duty to maintain what we have but not build or plant anything new? That does not seem practical in our ever-growing city.

My main concern though is that the Service Delivery Report is just wrong. It is incomplete. All the services that appear on pages 23, 24 and 25, that are identified as 'NOT REQUIRED' as Non-legislated all fall under the Charter's stated purposes of the City. Those are:

- a) to provide good government,
- b) to provide services, facilities or other things that council considers to be necessary or desirable for all or part of the city,
- c) to develop and maintain safe, orderly, viable and sustainable communities; and
- d) to promote and maintain the health, safety, and welfare of the inhabitants

So, as I presented during the budget process, there is ample room within the City's legislated Charter for Council to do everything it can to address the substantial inequities that exist in Winnipeg. I would like to highlight the Charter's use of the word inhabitants as an example. It is a broad term and is therefore the most inclusive as it does not seek to limit its responsibilities to



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say citizens or taxpayers. The document seems designed to allow Council to address emerging needs.

The Charter also states that:

The city is created to be a responsible and accountable government with respect to matters within its jurisdiction.

This brings me to my final concern, which is the intent behind the Service Delivery Report. Councillor Gillingham has made it clear, most recently in last week's Winnipeg Free Press article that he sees this report as a "[means of answering the question of how the city should partner with the province, local organizations and the private sector to decide funding responsibilities of various services.](#)"

This implies that there is a willingness to partner from these other sectors. Is there?

As I presented during the budget process where the private sector is concerned, for decades now, the amount raised in business taxes has remained stable at around \$60 million even as revenues and inflation have grown. This was done by cutting the business tax by half over that time. If the business tax rate had been kept at 9.75%, we would have had an extra **\$60 million** in revenue. Even if we had kept the rate at 4.97% (2019 rate), we would have an extra **\$1.55 million** while remaining one of the least expensive cities in which to do business. However, the business lobby was successful in getting another cut. Are they a willing partner?

As to the province I will just cite a recent media release asking for expressions of interest to 'partner' with the province to find a private investor to back a [social impact bond aimed at reducing youth recidivism rates.](#) The release highlighted the need for innovative approaches. The evidence demonstrates that we already know what works: Mentorship and better alternatives to gangs through employment and education with all the necessary supports that go along with that. The province currently does not fund or unreliably underfunds many already successful programs, but they are looking to offload something to a private investor for a period of time with no commitment to fund it themselves if it is successful. Most importantly, since the investor will get a return on their investment, it will ultimately cost the taxpayer more than if the government had just funded it themselves. Does this sound like a reliable partner?

My point being that while the province and private sector must play their role, the City seems to have limited ability to influence either of these potential partners.



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Councillor Gillingham was quoted in that same Free Press article as saying: "[The City of Winnipeg, speaking as a financier, just does not have the financial capacity to be all things to all people](#)," he said.

Well if that is true then perhaps we should commit to being a city that prioritizes the needs of those who have the least and/or face the most barriers over those who have the resources through certainly hard work but also the good luck to not have had to face systemic racism and entrenched intergenerational poverty.

I have re-sent my [March 2020 budget presentation](#) to you along with the supporting documents. In closing, I want to highlight just some of our low points:

- 1) Winnipeg Center has the highest rates of child poverty of any other urban federal riding. Over 40% of those children live in poverty.
- 2) The premature mortality rate can be as much as 5x higher in one area of the city as another. The difference in life expectancy can be as high as 18 years.
- 3) 2016 Census data maps combined with the most recent tax filer data demonstrate that the areas in the city with the highest rates of poverty are also the most racialized.

And this was all before Covid-19.

Mayor Bowman, I appreciate all the sentiments you expressed in your [blog on Black Lives Matter](#). I am now asking you and all members of EPC to back those words up by not seeking to limit what the City can and should do to address all the existing inequity. That needs to include systemic reform through policy and the funds to back them up.

I am asking that you postpone any discussion on the required services report or grant review process until at the very least the Our Winnipeg consultations have been completed and the poverty reduction strategy has been finished. These two documents should be essential in how the city moves forward, as we all know that Covid-19 has only served to exacerbate the lives of those who were already suffering.

Kate Kehler, Executive Director