Submitted by Lukas Thiessen,
Master Student, U of W
EPC - Jan 16, 2013

Greetings Mayor Sam Katz and City Council Members,

I represent a delegation of Master's students who will graduate with degrees in Curatorial Practices at the University of Winnipeg. We represent the next generation of museum and art gallery professionals. We are here to address the proposed budget cut of 10% to Winnipeg's museums, and ask that the cut be entirely eliminated. Winnipeg's municipal plan in 2011 described Winnipeg as a "City of the Arts." This vision is threatened.

The current economic focus of the city encourages outstanding private sector investments. To capitalize on these investments, the city needs to continue public sector funding. Our concerns are not confined to the arts and cultural industries, but are shared by members of the private business sector. A recent report from the Winnipeg Arts Council, ~~the Vice President of~~ quoted the Vice President of Community Affairs and Marketing for Investors Group who explained, "It's good business to ensure that the community where you operate is healthy [and] the arts is definitely an indicator of a healthy community." This quote suggests the private business sector will not unanimously support the proposed cut.

In the 2012 Message from the Mayor, one fifth of the address reflects pride for the Canadian Museum for Human Rights. What citizen can believe this proud statement, when mere months after it is made, council proposes to cut museum funding? The Canadian Museum for Human Rights will have programs that rely on the collections and expertise of Winnipeg's wider museum community. The entire museums community needs support.

buffalo NATUR

Perhaps Some councillors expect museums to raise funds from the private sector to cover the proposed cuts. This expectation is misleading, and an examination of the funding for the Canadian Museum for Human Rights will show this. Of this museum's so-called private sector funding, the museum has received $4.5 million dollars from provincial crown corporations, and five million dollars from the government of Ontario. Also, the 3.6 million dollars ~~given~~ from the city was taken from a federal grant to the city. Council, please recognize ~~that private~~ that public funding ~~is actually~~ contributes to private sector funding, and public funds are needed for our museums, who use ~~need~~ this money to support projects including grant writing. Funding cuts reduce the ability of museums to attract private-sector investment.

Museums hold their collections in the public trust. Our delegation's greatest concern is the stewardship and public access to these collections. As children, we all took field trips to museums, and those of us with children bring them on outings to ~~the~~ museums. These budget cuts threaten our children's future with less of knowledge, cultural pride, and interest in preserving our history. If the budget passes, the cuts will affect educational programs programs at our museums. This programming increases civic involvement and helps shape responsible citizens.

Local residents and outsiders across Canada are increasingly suspicious - ~~whether~~ rightly or wrongly - about ~~the~~ the integrity of municipal actions. For instance, suspicions arise regarding the connection between increased taxes and budget cuts. If taxes were not increased, the cuts might be better understood, but council proposes an increase in taxes.

buffalo NATUR

councillors and

The integrity of municipal actions would be enhanced if citizens had more time to respond to the budget than seven days. Be brave. Let councillors and citizens have ~~March 31, when the budget is due~~ more breathing room, there is over a month before it is due.

An economic study conducted recently by Prairie Research Associates for the Winnipeg Arts Council provides hard data on the viability of the industry facing a cut. The following numbers are even greater when applied to the museum industry.

1) Every dollar City Council gives to the arts generates almost twenty dollars of private funding, as well as federal and provincial sources. Institutions will not be able to generate the same capital without municipal funding and will actually lose other funding.

2) For every dollar of Winnipeg's economic output, 4 cents comes from the arts and creative industries, which generate almost one billion dollars each year in output. Cuts to museums have a ripple effect. Consider this:

The director for the St. Boniface Museum reported that they may close their doors if the 10% cut passes. The director explained that the cuts could make the museum irrelevant, and I quote, "The fear is that you go into a downward spiral of lost attendance, lost programming, etc." The museum is housed in Winnipeg's oldest building. It was western Canada's first hospital, orphanage, and seniors' home. The museum is recognized by the province as a STAR Attraction and enjoys a national reputation for its collection and the building itself. Staff members are recognized for their professional expertise and experience. This reputation results in brings frequent requests for them to participate in peer review panels

and other consultative forums. Councillors. Are you prepared to explain why this museum is no longer needed? Are you prepared to remove the building where the father of Manitoba went to school and perhaps pave it over with a parking lot?

3) 1.9 million seats are filled each year by 12 local arts and cultural organizations, including the Manitoba Museum and Manitoba Children's Museum. This attendance is more than double the attendance for professional sports franchises in the city combined. A 10% cut to museums ensures that attendance at arts and cultural institutions will drop.

4) Almost 94% of all expenditures by local non-profit arts and cultural institutions are spent right here in Winnipeg. The money which councillors will receive in their discretionary budgets to spend on their wards would go directly back to these wards anyway without cuts to museums.

The chair of the St. Boniface Museum addressed the concern of losing professionals who could sit on museum boards. The Masters students I represent in the Cultural Studies program anticipate entering the field when we graduate. Until two years ago, students had to leave Winnipeg to study in this field. When the University of Winnipeg started this program, the city was provided with a growing number of trained professionals from within the city. If the city has jobs for these professionals, this investment stays in the city and enhances Winnipeg's reputation. A week ago, we were asked to come to class yesterday with a resume for a job posting we wanted.

After these proposed cuts, not a single student in the class was interested in a job in Winnipeg. Mr. Mayor and council members, are you prepared to drive out the newly trained professionals coming from the city's post-secondary institutions with these cuts? We ask you not to take the city's museums for granted, and we ask that the proposed 10% cut be eliminated. Finally, we ask City Council to ~~the trained professionals~~ support trained professionals in Winnipeg, and give this industrial sector a reason to remain in the city.

If there is extra time:

As a child, I passed the Living Prairie Museum on Ness Avenue everyday on my way to school. This museum is a 12 hectare (30 acre) preserve for tall grass prairie. Before European settlement, tall grass prairie covered one million square kilometres in the heart of North America. Now, in Manitoba, 1/20th of 1% of the original tall grass prairie museum. One councillor mentioned a 10% cut is not very much when the big picture is considered. When we consider the big picture, if there is almost nothing left, do you want to cut the 1/20th of 1% of all the remains of this country's tall grass prairie, cared for by a local museum, by another 10%?

- buy after the 2 reps. of Winnipeg business community (one of whom was a policy analyst)