From: Kim Riddell [
Sent: Tuesday, January 16, 2018 1:06 PM
To: CLK-CityClerks
Subject: RE: SALE OF THE VIMY ARENA & SURROUNDING GREEN SPACE (255 Hamilton Ave., ST. CHARLES WARD, WINNIPEG MB)

I would like my email/letter to be included in the Executive Policy Committee Meeting (EPC) dated January 17, 2018 and the City Council Meeting dated January 25, 2018.

RE: SALE OF THE VIMY ARENA & SURROUNDING GREEN SPACE (255 Hamilton Ave., ST. CHARLES WARD, WINNIPEG MB)

I, Kim Riddell, DO NOT support the sale of the Vimy Arena and surrounding green space located at 255 Hamilton Avenue (St. Charles Ward) Winnipeg Manitoba.

As one member of the Bruce Oake Foundation recently stated in the media, *"Reluctant as I am to engage in hyperbole, I will say lives are being lost every day. We can't save them all but we'll have a shot at some when the Bruce Oake Recovery Centre is open. And maybe you'll have to decide if those lives are worth $1.43 million"*.

I want to translate that for you: *Although men and women are losing their lives every day, we'll have a shot at saving some men once the centre is open, and you'll have to decide if saving those men is worth $1.43 million. Saving women isn't worth anything though, because this centre is just for men.* That's right – **no women will be allowed to access treatment, and not one single woman's life will be saved if this is built.**

I'm not going to mince words. The proposed land use discriminates against women who are addicted to opioids. Quite frankly, I can't believe that I even have to explain why it's wrong to deny women equal access to life-saving treatment.

It would be one thing if the Foundation was financing this project entirely through private donations. But as soon as the City is asked to hand over a public asset worth $1.43

million, things change. When public money is spent to tackle a problem affecting the entire community, it should be done “in the public interest” – in other words, it should be good for everyone, not just men.

And why is this centre proposed just for men, when opioid addictions are equally devastating to men and women? Essentially, the Foundation and their supporters argue that you can’t have women and men in the same program or they’ll “pair up” and won’t successfully complete their programming.

Excluding women so that they don’t somehow “distract” men, is punishing women for men’s behaviour. This bears repeating – **you’re punishing women for men’s behaviour**.

The Foundation and their supporters may respond by saying that’s not what they mean. What they really meant to say is that men and women will distract each other “equally”. But notice that they’re still choosing to help only men, not women.

It’s like trying to stop sexual harassment by banning women from working with men, or banning women from going anywhere in public where they might run into men.

And segregating genders won’t work anyways, because not all men want relationships with women – some men are gay or bisexual.

The Foundation and its supporters may respond by they’re just building a men’s centre “first”, and they’ll work on getting a women’s centre “next”. Translation: they’re going to spend millions and millions of dollars on men right now, and they’ll put off helping women until later, if they get to it at all.

Women are not second-class citizens. We’re not going to beg for crumbs and quietly make do with whatever’s left after the men have been looked after. **Women deserve equal access to treatment, and an equal shot at surviving addiction.**

At this point I want to take a step back, and let you know that I'm not just here just to criticize; **I'm here to assure you that there are many other options** beyond a) approving the proposed stand-alone recovery centre just for men, or b) doing nothing.

When I read a news item about any proposal to spend public money, I ask myself three basic questions:

1. Will this be **effective** (improve or fix a problem)?
2. Will this be **efficient** (make good use of resources)?
3. Will this be **inclusive** (cover everyone affected by the problem)?

In looking at the issue of opioid treatment, I think the key to inclusion is accepting that since men and women are equally affected by drug addiction, you have to provide equal access to services.

Therefore, one option for a stand-alone center is to set aside 25 beds for men and 25 beds for women. If the Foundation insists on segregating by gender, then the facility could be built with separate entrances, kitchens, dining areas, meeting rooms, sleeping quarters and so on. This would ensure that facilities for men and women were ready at the same time.

A better option for a stand-alone centre is to set aside 25 beds for men and 25 for women, and share common elements. This would make the project more efficient, because the Foundation wouldn't need to build two separate kitchens, dining areas, meeting rooms etc.

The **best option is to invest in existing residential addiction treatment programs.** And there is a wide variety to choose from. There are institutions that are publicly funded, partially publicly funded and some that are privately funded. Some programs allow for stays of three to four weeks, some allow for stays of six months or more. Some publicly funded programs are very inclusive, providing services to men, women and trans individuals, sometimes in co-ed facilities.

This provides a lot of different opportunities for the Foundation to make a difference. For example, it could donate funds to existing organizations to either reduce the amount individuals are expected to pay, or to expand the length of time that individuals can stay. Or the Foundation could fund an addition to an existing building to expand programming. The City could also contribute in different ways, for example by waiving property tax increases on new additions to a recovery centre for a period of time.

Leveraging existing infrastructure, and supporting a variety of approaches to treatment, ensures that programs are not only inclusive, but effective and efficient as well. This approach allows the Foundation to **start saving the lives of women and men today**, not sometime in the future if land is purchased, re-zoning is successful and a new building erected.

I want to close by saying there are many options out there, and it's easy to provide equal access to addiction programs if your plans include women from the start. And it's important to provide programs that help everyone equally, because **we're all in this together**. We don't want to save just sons and brothers from addictions; we want to save every child, sibling, parent, partner and spouse.

The third week in January has just been proclaimed as "Women's Equality Week in Manitoba". Therefore, **to honour women's equality, I urge you to join me in opposing the sale of the Vimy Arena and surrounding green space** for the purpose of building a recovery centre exclusively for men.

Thank you for your consideration.

Date: January 16, 2018

Name: Kim Riddell