Save Our Seine
river environment inc.

March 13, 2019

Executive Policy Committee
City of Winnipeg

Re : 2019 Preliminary Budget

The Save Our Seine (SOS) board regrets that it was unable to send a representative to speak at today's preliminary budget meeting. We really hate to miss any opportunity to raise awareness about SOS and the important work that is done by our organization.

We are very grateful that the grant supporting SOS is included in the preliminary budget and wish to thank Councillor Mayes, the Water and Waste Department, and City Council for the on-going support. The consistent annual support from the city has allowed SOS to deliver its annual river clean-ups and stewardship activities, strengthen relationships with city departments, and increase our capacity to attract third-party funding and take on new projects that will benefit the city.

In particular, we would like to recognize Councillor Mayes who provided a grant to SOS in 2013 and then worked to have Save Our Seine considered for funding on an annual basis through the Water and Waste Department. As a result, SOS has received $30,000 each year since 2014. Our organization does not receive operating grants from the province or the federal government as many arts and heritage organizations do. As such, the City of Winnipeg is the core funder for Save Our Seine.

SOS is aware that the 2019 budget is very tight and a request for any increase in this amount for 2019 would not likely be successful. 2020 will be the 30th Anniversary of Save Our Seine and it is our hope that the city will look favourably upon a request for an increase next year – giving us more reason to celebrate.

SOS is a very small organization with limited human resources (part-time Executive Director year-round) and a big mandate:

- To act as stewards of the urban Seine River, preserving and restoring its natural environment
- To educate the public and encourage public participation in the stewardship and appreciation of the Seine River environment
- To monitor actions taken by the jurisdictions of government, communities, and organizations which impact the Seine River environment and to work cooperatively with them to seek and implement solutions to problems encountered

River clean-ups are the core service that Save Our Seine provides to the city. The province provides funding through the Urban Green Team program for SOS to hire a seasonal team to clean the Seine River each year but SOS must provide full-time supervision of the team – which requires additional fundraising effort to hire a Clean-up Coordinator. The SOS River Keepers keep the Seine River clean and navigable and assist with park operations by maintaining the associated parks, green spaces, and trails along the 26-kilometre length of the

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urban Seine River. Every year, the team removes dozens of bags of litter and truckloads of large bulky waste (furniture, appliances, mattresses, construction debris, bikes, shopping carts, etc.) from the river – providing a service similar to that provided by Take Pride Winnipeg and the BIZ program – but centered on the Seine River and its associated parks rather than city streets. Many of the natural spaces along the river are only accessible from the river and the debris is submerged in muck so it is very strenuous work compared to keeping city streets clean. These annual clean-ups enhance the beauty of the Seine River and make our city more attractive for local residents, recreation, and tourism. It is much-needed work that is not possible within the limited annual budget for regular parks operations.

Save Our Seine has been hard at work on grant requests that will bring significant money for projects that will enhance the natural habitat, trails, and access to the river along the Seine River Greenway in 2019/2020. SOS has confirmed $145,000 so far with a request for $70,000 pending. All of this money is from third-party donors and is new money for projects that will benefit the city. This underscores the value of providing annual support to groups like SOS so that they can leverage additional grant money from outside sources. It also highlights the importance of having policies that support the fundraising efforts of community groups and allow recognition of these third-party grants and donations.

Much of the project money that SOS has raised for 2019/2020 will be spent on capital items that will improve Winnipeg parks, trails, and access to the river. SOS is meeting with the city administration tomorrow morning to continue discussions on the project details (how and where this capital will be spent over the next two years).

We regret that we cannot appear in delegation today to thank you in person for providing a grant for our small, but longstanding, environmental group. We invite you to attend our Annual General Meeting on Tuesday, April 16th to learn more about how our work benefits the city. We hope that you will look favourably on increasing the size of our grant in 2020 – to mark our 30th Anniversary.

Michele Kading
Executive Director
Save Our Seine River Environment Inc.