wayfinders
a bright futures program

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March 11, 2020

Dear Members of City Council:

I am writing in response to the proposed cuts to library services. Wayfinders Manitoba is an after-school mentorship and tutoring program that supports academically vulnerable students from low-income communities towards high-school graduation. This includes providing in-school advocacy and connecting our more then 400 high-school aged program registrants with in-school and community-based supports and resources.

We are disappointed and concerned with the tentative decision to limit library services and access and see it having an immediately negative impact on the young people in our community.

Originally, the library redevelopment plan included expanded services in the Seven Oaks area. This was a welcomed investment in accessible community resources. The North-West corner of the city is a rapidly growing community with many new developments. It is also a very diverse area of the city, and we experience in our work with young people and their families an increasing level of demand on our supports, and experience a population with complex needs.

Libraries are community institutions that play an important role in supporting those residents through access to social and educational supports. North-West Winnipeg is the primary area that newcomers to Canada settle in Winnipeg. Libraries are vital resources for people searching for jobs, learning English, accessing affordable programming for families as well as being central in attempts to increase literacy rates for all Canadians.

In Wayfinders, we believe that libraries are community pillars that serve a multitude of purposes and often serve the marginalized in society. We would welcome a re-evaluation of the proposed budget to ensure there is a prioritization of those most needing access to supports and resources.

We know definitively that our community benefits greatly from community-based education and recreational facilities that libraries provide.

Sincerely,

Meghan Loewen Cook
Director, Wayfinders Manitoba Inc.