Winnipeg
Office of the Mayor ~ Bureau du Maire

INFORMATION - COMMUNIQUÉ

WINNIPEG PARTNERS WITH BLOOMBERG HARVARD CITY LEADERSHIP INITIATIVE

WINNIPEG, November 7, 2019 – The City of Winnipeg will be using a unique initiative to access the academic acumen and research capacity of Harvard University to help identify ways to reduce certain service demands on the Winnipeg Police Service, Mayor Brian Bowman announced today.

“Our city has a tremendous opportunity over the next several months to access a host of resources and research support to help us address a challenge that’s been a key focus of the Winnipeg Police Board’s current strategic plan,” said Mayor Brian Bowman.

Earlier this summer, the City of Winnipeg was chosen to participate in an exclusive initiative collaboratively run by Harvard Kennedy School, Harvard Business School, and Bloomberg Philanthropies. The initiative, called the Bloomberg Harvard City Leadership Initiative, strives to inspire and strengthen city leaders and to equip cities across the world with the tools necessary to innovate, change, and grow.

The program, now in its third year, invites forty cities from across the world to participate in the year long program. Cities participating this year include many from the United States as well as cities in Ghana, Australia, and Slovakia. Joining Winnipeg as the only other Canadian city participating this year is Mississauga, Ontario.

As part of the program, the City of Winnipeg gets access to Harvard faculty, students, staff, and other resources to help the city improve in a key practice area, and to address a key social challenge. The practice area identified in Winnipeg for improvement is cross-boundary collaboration.

“With the assistance of the Bloomberg Harvard initiative, we’ve been given the opportunity to advance and improve our city’s ability to collaborate across agencies, jurisdictions, and sectors to ‘solve’ a critical social challenge of our choice,” said Mayor Bowman. “We want to use this opportunity to help us find ways to reduce dispatch of police resources to calls for service that are not criminal in nature.”

The Mayor emphasized this is not an exercise in finding budget savings nor dictating police operations.

“This is a very focused effort aimed at finding ways to optimize allocation and dispatch of critically important police resources, a resource that has the exclusive legal and regulatory responsibility for enforcement of *The Criminal Code of Canada*,” said Mayor Bowman. “The Bloomberg Harvard initiative represents an exciting opportunity to bring different levels of

government together, different agencies and organizations together, to think creatively, innovatively, and with open minds to find ways to reduce demand and responsibility on our police service to respond to calls for service that are not, in fact, criminal," said Mayor Bowman.

The Winnipeg Police Board's current strategic plan identifies that in Winnipeg approximately one-half to two-thirds of all calls for service to which police officers are dispatched are in response to issues that are not criminal.

In October, Statistics Canada released its annual *Police Resources in Canada* report. This report indicated that across Canada police responded to 12.8 million calls for service in 2018. It estimates that 50% to 80% of these calls to which police responded to across Canada were non-criminal in nature comprising incidents such as alarms, disturbances, domestic disputes, traffic accidents, sick or injured persons, overdoses, and mental health-related calls.

Being dispatched to these calls can have a significant impact on police workload and resources the Mayor said, noting that if police resources being dispatch to these calls could be reduced they could be more readily available for dispatch to other calls for service or for more proactive, police initiated enforcement activity. In their report, Statistics Canada cites operating expenditures across Canada for policing reached $15 billion in 2018 and has generally been increasing nationally since 1997, a national trend also evident in Winnipeg.

The Mayor said dispatch of police officers to calls for service that are not criminal in nature will be required at certain times, but stressed there is an opportunity to optimize dispatch such that the responding agency, as well as the responding personnel, are better aligned with the needs of those seeking assistance.

"It is unrealistic to expect the Bloomberg Harvard initiative to eliminate root, socioeconomic and health challenges underlying many of the calls to which police officers are the initial first responders dispatched," said Mayor Bowman. "However, a greater degree of shared understanding of this issue's complexity can significantly contribute toward a cross jurisdictional effort that might not only help us optimize the allocation and dispatch of police resources in the short or medium term, but also potentially improve health outcomes for the city's population over the longer term. This is what I hope we can achieve in partnership and with the assistance of the Bloomberg Harvard initiative."

Further details about the Bloomberg Harvard City Leadership Initiative are available here: https://www.cityleadership.harvard.edu/program. Statistics Canada's *Police Resources in Canada, 2018* report is publicly available on their webpage, www.statcan.gc.ca. The Winnipeg Police Board's current strategic plan is publicly available on the Board's webpage: https://winnipeg.ca/clerks/boards/WpgPoliceBoard.

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