# STOP. THINK. DO THE MATH.

The $73 million number for the concourse involves a full rebuild of the intersection, with something I have heard nobody even mention: $13 million in major sewer and water main replacements and upgrades the city water and waste department says it needs to do. If the concourse is closed, do we still go ahead with the $38 million in total it will cost to do those? Because that also means ripping up, then rebuilding the intersection and the five years of rush hour traffic jams that so worries the mayor.

Given the recent huge sewage spill in south Winnipeg and a closed daycare thanks to another sewer line break, both in the last six weeks, I'm thinking if water and waste says they need to do something, we should listen.

Direct project costs for concourse repairs add up to just 35 million of the 73 million. Without the 13 million for the sewer and water line work, it's 60 million for the concourse. The city's public service estimates it would cost up to 50 million—maybe more-- to shutter the concourse, another 10 million for surface crosswalks. Oh, gosh... that's 60 million, too.

But nobody knows if that number's accurate. Because until March 1, it occurred to absolutely no one to even think about closing the concourse.

And you all have to wait until after you vote to close it, to find out what it would actually cost. How would it work? What would the economic impacts be? We don't know. We know nothing that we need to know about closing it.

Oh, but five years of badly disrupted traffic. There's the difference.

Odd. On page 34, the Stantec report says the City of Winnipeg model run listed these impacts:
AM Peak, Increased traffic on Broadway, Princess and Bannatyne, slight increase on York.
PM Peak, Increased traffic on William Stephenson, Garry, McDermott, and Smith north of Portage.
That doesn't seem all that awful... but maybe the model has been refined since 2023. Still, it's not like Winnipeggers aren't used to constant road closures and detours all over the city.

But what if it only costs 20 million to close the concourse, plus 10 million for crosswalks? That's 30 million. Well—what if the concourse was repaired through cost-sharing with the corner property owners? That could cost the city as little as 30 million—but the mayor refused to allow his public service to even pursue that option. Although that was what they recommended. The public service does have permission to talk with property owners, but only about decommissioning issues...
And only after you vote to close it. Fait accompli. No going back.

So even at 20 million to close the concourse, the city, again, might only have to spend the same amount to to repair it as to close it. But we don't know those numbers. Never mind, you don't need them. Vote without knowing any of that.

In case anyone's forgotten: it is a primary job of a city to maintain its civic infrastructure. This is part of that infrastructure. If it matters, you maintain it with taxpayer dollars for the benefit of the taxpayer. We rebuild our roads constantly, spending wads of money and creating great big traffic jams. The public Service budget for this year is 1.7 BILLION dollars. A lot of it is rebuilding and repairing civic infrastructure—over and over and over again. What's different about this?

Not a single stakeholder at Portage and Main was consulted regarding the mayor's decision to close it. No one – not property owners or businesses, not the arts community, not the public, was asked if they agree.

The property owners, through the Building Owners and Managers of Manitoba, do not agree. The mayor has his numbers all wrong, they say. The Downtown BIZ does not agree. Businesses they encouraged and nurtured would be hurt or killed off outright, they say. They're both right.

And what about your constituents? Nobody's asked them what they think. A radio station straw poll two weeks ago found 70 percent of the people who voted want the concourse to stay open. But that's it for public input. This motion says you'll get public input-- after you agree to close the concourse. Little late then, don't you think?

I have a vested interest: my husband's massive sculptured concrete wall. That important Western Canadian contemporary artwork will almost certainly be buried if the mayor has his way. The Royal Canadian Academy of Art, the most prestigious national arts organization in Canada, agrees this work must be saved. Once he realized it was there, the mayor asked for a study into what it would cost to move it elsewhere. That study done yet? I watched how that wall went in. It's an integral part of a key load bearing wall. Good luck figuring that out: that price tag's unimaginable. And the additional time the Public Service was granted a week ago, to refine its wildeyed estimate of 20 to 50 million to close the concourse-- that done yet? Nope?

The city's public service told the mayor they want to proceed on the project, and they expected property owners would cost share. He ignored them. So did your Executive Policy Committee, for reasons I cannot even begin to fathom, when they passed the motion that sits before you.

Even if you were to blame the full 73 million on the concourse, including the sewer/watermain work, with cost-sharing, it could cost less to repair the concourse than to bury it. But you don't know that. You have no clue. Because the public service doesn't yet have even a remotely accurate closing cost estimate, and the mayor refused their request to undertake cost-sharing discussions to keep the concourse open. Instead, he called for this vote. Fourteen business days after announcing he is closing the concourse.

Fourteen days. Why do you have to vote right this minute, based on virtually no costing or cost-sharing information at all? No public input at all?

But you need to vote now, right now. No time for accurate estimates. No time to discuss cost-sharing repairs with property owners—though if I were them and had been blindsided with this as the mayor did to them with a phone call fifteen days ago, I'd be a little grumpy about opening my chequebook. Spend maybe 60 million to shutter the concourse and open crosswalks—

maybe less -- and get literally nothing but the joy of frostbite in January for that money, and no traffic jams for the five years the project would take, except there are those that would be created forever, on an hourly basis, by pedestrians trying to cross eight lanes of traffic... in minus 30. With 40 kilometer winds. Oh—and those sewer and watermains on the potential verge of falling apart. Might that not be the biggest sinkhole you ever saw, right in the middle of Portage and Main.

Or maybe, instead, 30 or 40 million (with crosswalks) cost-shared, for something Winnipeg can continue to be proud of. And, again, properly-upgraded sewer and water lines mean tearing the intersection up anyway. And we need those.

Don't even think about the cost of saving the artwork. We can stand a little quiet, sideways-glancing national cultural derision. And yeah, it may have to be done all over again in 40 years. Again... that's what you do with public infrastructure that matters. You set aside cash to cover those costs, and you maintain it. That's not really something the city's been in the habit of doing, but maybe it's time you did. It costs taxpayers money. And then, when necessary, you do it all over again.

It has been just fourteen business days since the big announcement.

What kind of sense does any of this even make? Do you not think it makes sense to get the real numbers, to talk with the stakeholders around the intersection, to find out what the public actually wants here?

And then, armed with actual information, make an informed decision? Is that too much to ask?

**https://bnnbreaking.com/world/canada/winnipegs-portage-and-main-reopening-raises-concerns-for-canadas-largest-concrete-artwork-by-bruce-head**

**Winnipeg's Portage and Main Reopening Raises Concerns for Canada's Largest Concrete Artwork by Bruce Head**

Winnipeg contemplates reopening Portage and Main to pedestrians, risking the loss of a significant artwork by Bruce Head. A crucial debate on cultural preservation ensues.
**Sakchi Khandelwal**

The city of Winnipeg's consideration to reopen the iconic Portage and Main intersection to pedestrian traffic by summer 2025 has sparked a significant cultural concern. Mayor Scott Gillingham's announcement, aiming to circumvent a $73 million repair bill, has inadvertently placed Canada's largest concrete artwork, an installation by the late Winnipeg artist Bruce Head, at risk of being lost to history. This development poses a challenging dilemma between economic rationality and preserving a vital piece of the city's artistic heritage.

**Art at the Heart of Urban Development**
At the core of the debate is Bruce Head's monumental concrete artwork that encircles the entire concourse at Portage and Main. With a circumference of over 400 feet, it stands as the largest concrete work by an artist in Canada. The piece's uniqueness is further emphasized by its integration into the site, making relocation seemingly impossible. Judy Waytiuk, Bruce Head's widow, has voiced her concerns, highlighting the artwork's significance to Winnipeg's cultural and artistic history. The artwork, described as a 'huge labour of love' by Waytiuk, encapsulates years of dedication and artistic brilliance, making the prospect of its disappearance a heartbreaking possibility.

**The Intersection of Culture and Infrastructure**
The city's plan to reopen Portage and Main to pedestrians is part of a broader urban development strategy, which includes the launch of a new Winnipeg Transit route network. This initiative, while forward-looking in its approach to urban mobility and infrastructure repair, has inadvertently placed the future of Head's artwork in jeopardy. The challenge lies in balancing the economic benefits of infrastructure development with the preservation of the city's cultural landmarks. The artwork's potential inaccessibility post-concourse closure raises critical questions about the value placed on public art in urban planning decisions.
As discussions progress, the fate of Head's artwork remains uncertain. The City of Winnipeg has yet to provide a definitive answer regarding the concourse's future and, by extension, the artwork's fate. This situation underscores the need for a comprehensive approach to urban development that considers the cultural, historical, and economic dimensions of such projects. Stakeholders, including the artist's family, city officials, and the public, are keenly awaiting a resolution that honors both Winnipeg's cultural heritage and its future aspirations.

## COMMENTS FROM WINNIPEGGERS AND EX-WINNIPEGGERS

This is what Winnipeg's Gail Asper told As It Happens last September when the report into renewing Portage and Main was released:

Q: Some people prefer, you know, in the cold temperatures to be underground, don't they?

À: Sure, of course. And guess what? In Toronto, you have the option. You can be at Bay and Bloor and go underground. But I prefer to go above ground. So other cities give people the choice.

I'm, on a daily basis when I'm downtown, giving directions to poor visitors and business people trying to get to their meetings from out of town, who find the route unintelligible and off-putting. So I've thought a lot about this, obviously, and I think to be more welcoming to people, you have to give them the choice.

I feel strongly that this work of art needs to be treasured and enjoyed as it was meant to be.
**JoAnne Nelson** (Oakbank, 2024-03-08)

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This is an important and epic piece of Bruce Head’s contribution to Winnipeg, Canada and The Global Art Community and must be preserved and shared for generations to come!!
**Tara Head** (Oliver, 2024-03-08)

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Keep history, tradition and local artists alive.
**Kathleen Johnson** (Surrey , 2024-03-08)

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Art matters. I care deeply about this sculpture. It must be saved.
**Ralph Markham** (Melbourne , 2024-03-08)

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Have some respect for the great art made by our artists. These are historical and important pieces to be enjoyed for generations to come. Make the effort to do the right thing.
**Brigitte Dion** (Winnipeg, 2024-03-08)

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Art should not be destroyed.
**Johanna Bates** (Vancouver, 2024-03-08)

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Art is essential. Crossing Portage and Main is not.
**Karen Webb** (Brandon, 2024-03-08)

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This beautiful sculpture, done by the amazing Bruce Head, needs to be saved! It is priceless and can’t just be destroyed.
**Luanne Diachun** (Winnipeg , 2024-03-08)

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Mr. Head was an important Canadian artist!
**James Worobec** (Winnipeg, 2024-03-08)

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Please Save this beautiful and inspirational artwork!
**elizabeth Campbell** (Sterling, 2024-03-08)

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Art for Arts sake
**Richard Millar** (Winnipeg, 2024-03-08)

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This is a heritage site and essential to preserve and a landmark tribute from a notable Manitoba artist plus I have personal family connections with this family
**Verona Malmquist** (Oliver, 2024-03-08)

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The Bruce Head art installation at Portage and Main is an important part of Winnipegs history.
**GAIL HARGREAVES** (Winnipeg, 2024-03-08)

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It's crazy to open the intersection. Keep the concourse!
**Darrell Horn** (Winnipeg, 2024-03-08)

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This work is beautiful and needs to stay where it was designed to be.
**Shawna McKenzie** (Winnipeg, 2024-03-09)

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Bruce Head's work should be preserved.
**Barry Horeczy** (Stittsville, 2024-03-09)

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He was my grandfather, and his work deserves to be seen for generations to come!
**Cameron Nasholm** (Penticton, 2024-03-09)

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This art is an important piece of art by a Manitoban master artists. The concourse also plays an important role for access from Portage and Main to Memorial via indoor spaces. It's a significant corridor, especially in the winter months which is most the year. It ties our downtown together. With more housing being developed and connected to this downtown corridor it becomes even more important. One can live and work along the space. No reason we can't have surface and underground corridors.
**David Markham** (Winnipeg, 2024-03-09)

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Much like the grand banker’s halls that still line Main Street near the famous intersection with Portage, the Bruce Head wall just below that intersection is an important part of its history and culture. To lose it would deny this and future generations the opportunity to (“appreciate the city’s unique history and, in time, (re)discover and reinvent it - much like the city did at The Forks. Let’s play the long game. It is what Winning does best.
**Paul Taylor** (Olympia, 2024-03-09)

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Bruce was an amazing artist. I want to see a peice of his beautiful art stay a legacy in Winnipeg.
**Peaches Glenn** (Murillo, 2024-03-09)

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Public art matters!
**Mary McLaren** (Dartmouth, 2024-03-09)

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Iam signing because this is my grandfathers legacy
**Austin Head** (Grande prairie , 2024-03-09)

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Bruce Head was a local artist - right from Winnipeg who created his works of art right in Winnipeg. He had had his art displayed in the MB Hydro building and the University of Manitoba had much of his art. This huge piece needs to continue to be appreciated and displayed. Keep the concourse open - don’t fill it in - that would be heart-breaking.
**Stephanie Subtelny** (Winnipeg , 2024-03-09)

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Bruce was a mentor to me in my art. I understand there are costs to keeping the space intact from a facilities point of view. Perhaps there is a better way to utilize the space while keeping the art intact.
**Karen Biko** (Calgary, 2024-03-10)

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Bruce Head is one of Manitoba/Canada’s foremost artists of his time. His “Wall” is a unique piece of his work. It deserves to be celebrated in a venue where all people can observe and enjoy. It should not be buried and forgotten.
**Diane Bates** (Winnipeg , 2024-03-11)

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I believe that this iconic piece of work should be saved for future generations to observe and marvel.
**Jeff Monk** (Gimli, 2024-03-11)

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I knew Bruce, and cherish the 2 works by him I'm fortunate to have.... And because it's time this City got its shit together re. public art.... S.L
**Sig Laser** (Winnipeg, 2024-03-11)

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Bruce Head was an important artist in Manitoba and his work needs to be reinstalled in an appropriate permanent home.
**Lisa Rae Minuk** (Winnipeg, 2024-03-11)

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I Am a huge Bruce Head fan
**Alison Earl** (Fort Erie, 2024-03-11)

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Bruce Head's artwork on the underground concourse is an iconic piece of this city's artistic and cultural heritage.
**Neil Coligan** (Winnipeg , 2024-03-11)

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I want BruceHead's Art saved!
**Ellen Kruger** (Winnipeg, 2024-03-12)

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This is an important historical work by the brilliant artist Bruce Head, a significant member of Winnipeg’s art community. Also, why do they have to fill in the entire underground mall? Just because people can now cross the street? What is the reason? Couldn’t this site be turned in a small art gallery / winter walking track / coffee shop down there, with this piece as its centre?
**Catherine Hunter** (Winnipeg, 2024-03-12)

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We need to preserve public art and maintain accessible means of travel downtown.
**Vicki Rempel** (Winnipeg, 2024-03-12)

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I am a big fan of the Bruce Head artwork in the concourse. It would be a crime to lose it.
**Terry Sargeant** (Gimli, 2024-03-12)

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I am from Winnipeg and remember this mural vividly! It is a work of art and should not be buried EVER!!
**Barb Croft** (Penticton , 2024-03-13)

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Because art history in our city is important.
**Jordan Miller** (Winnipeg , 2024-03-13)

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Whether the decision is to open the intersection at street level, to close the concourse or to retain the concourse, there is no legitimate excuse for failing to preserve an impressive and significant piece of public art from a major Manitoba artist.
**Paul Thomas** (Winnipeg , 2024-03-13)

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Art should not be burried
**Hailey Prokop** (Penticton, 2024-03-13)

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I'm a Canadian artist who appreciates the significance of this massive art installation by Canadian artist Bruce Head. I have also been a pedestrian who has tried to cross this intersection above ground. I prefer the safety of the concourse.
**Barb Hoffmann** (Selkirk, 2024-03-13)

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I support public art
**Taylor Assion** (Vancouver, 2024-03-14)

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I’m a former Winnipegger and I knew Bruce as a gifted artist and a friend. This work is remarkable and I’d hate to see it destroyed. But I understand why people want to be able to cross the intersection above-ground again. My wish for the people who are making the decision is that they will thoughtfully balance financial and environmental considerations with respect for the work of an outstanding Manitoba artist.
**Heather Kennedy** (Vancouver, 2024-03-15)

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Public art is essential and this piece is a legacy for Winnipeg.
**Craig Mackie** (Chelsea, 2024-03-15)

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Bruce Head was a great artist and his works should not be destroyed.
**Jan Adaskin** (Gibsons , 2024-03-15)

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This man must not be forgotten and the city should not be deprived of the pleasure and beauty of his art!
**Lesley Hughes** (Winnipeg, 2024-03-18)