

SUBMISSION – PEARSON SINGBEIL MONTGOMERY

ITEM 6 OF THE REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE POLICY COMMITTEE DATED JUNE 18, 2024, REGARDING
PROPOSED GRANT INTAKE AND REVIEW PROCESS

Sent: Wednesday, June 26, 2024 8:23:25 AM

Personal information

Full name: Pearson Singbeil Montgomery

Email address:

Phone:

Job title:

Organization:

Address:

City: Winnipeg

Province or territory: Manitoba

Postal code:

Delegation information

Committee: Council

Committee - council: Opposed to the recommendations

Committee - other: N/A

Agenda item (number and title): EPC Report dated 2024-06-18: Item 6 - Proposed Community Grant
Intake and Review Process

Service inquiry: Submit Comments in writing

Participation preference: N/A

Comments in writing:

Dear Council:

I write because I am quite opposed to the community and neighbourhood grant proposal as it stands.

My primary reason for opposing the proposal is the drastic reduction in funding being made available to organizations in need, as well as the additional restrictions on funding being put in place which will make it very difficult for many affected organizations to continue their operations as they have under the City's current grant arrangement. On Page 3 of the EPC Recommendation, it is stated that "[t]he available grant amount to be awarded in 2025 is \$1.310 million." from what I understand, this is a reduction of more than \$2.1 Million over the previous arrangement.

While it is admirable to see the city attempt to develop a more transparent and accessible funding application process that would potentially allow more organizations to access funds, It is unfair to the organizations the city is currently supporting that less than half of the total funding currently available would have to effectively be divided between an even greater number of organizations and projects, leaving everyone worse off and having to look for supplementary funding elsewhere or to cut operations. It is clear that the City's intent in producing this new process is not to spur development for community initiatives but rather to gut established organizations that help disadvantaged Winnipeggers of funds they need because the City wants to put those funds towards unnecessary, unattainable vanity

projects like the Route 90 Expansion or towards providing tax incentives or breaks to developers, businesses, and other members of our community who are already well off.

The funding currently provided by the City is more flexible, and from what I've been told by some of my friends working in affected non-profits, some of the only operating grants available to them. Most available funding for community organizations is project-based, but many organizations require longer-term operational funding in order to even make those projects happen. To remove one of the only sources of funding available to these organizations for operational needs is effectively telling them to cut their operations.

One such organization I have been extensively involved with is Art City, Inc. of 616 Broadway Ave; which is listed twice under the "Appendix 3 - Grants and Payments Subject to Intake Process," which states that in 2024 Art City is budgeted to receive \$ 132,750. Art City has been around for more than 25 Years and its operations are broad and its impacts immense. Their core programming involves providing free, open-ended, accessible, youth-friendly, and professional-level arts programming and training to participants of all ages, although most of their participants are inner-city children and their families. This programming often involves paying professional artists, including many prominent national and international artists, to come to Art City to lead programming in their media. The scope of this programming is immense, with participants receiving experience in paint, drawing, sculpting, digital art, photography, music, dance, architecture, graphic design, indigenous arts, and more. Art City also provides a free healthy meal to all participants every day, runs a variety of outreach and service programs including programs that help their adolescent participants gain valuable, employable experience in community service and youth programming administration. Art City also provides sustainable employment with living wages to its staff, both of which are hard to find for Artists, and provides opportunities for up-and-coming artists (including many youth and indigenous artists) in Winnipeg and across Canada to get their foot in the door of a well-connected arts organization.

I have been an attendee and occasional volunteer at Art City for 15 years. I started attending at age 7 when I first moved to Winnipeg with my mother and two siblings. As a low-income, newly-single parent of three children with health issues, you can understand how difficult it was to make ends meet for my mom. Finding Art City was immensely important to us in this time and played a huge role in my upbringing. Because my siblings and I were able to attend Art City's evening programming and be fed a healthy dinner each day, my mother was able to find work to support our family while we were receiving educational and entertaining care from Art City, free of charge. There were and continue today not to be many organizations that provide such extensive and educationally valuable programming for free, especially in arts, where professional instruction is often costly and unattainable for low-income families. The role of Art City, in this sense, is unique; and I don't know where I would be today if not for the role Art City played in my life. And my story is not unique among art city participants. I'm confident many low-income youth were prevented from likely entering lives immersed in drugs and crime because Art City immersed them with art and love. Some of those participants from my childhood are now staff at Art City.

The fact of the matter is that Art City is only able to provide these extensive services to Winnipeg through the work of several full and part time staff and sustainable funding for projects, long-term programs, and guest artists. And this is only possible through operational grants like the ones currently given by the City of Winnipeg that are willing to put faith in an established organization with a decades-long history of strong results. From what I understand the City of Winnipeg is the largest single funder of Art City and, while funding from the Federal and Provincial Governments, other Non-Profits

like the United Way, and private donors are also part of the picture, that there is no clear alternative to the City's grants to attain the operational funding Art City needs. Read: The City of Winnipeg will be forcing Art City to downsize its essential programming for underserved Winnipeggers by cutting this funding.

And the Impact is not just on Art City. Other organizations near-and-dear to my heart are on Appendix 3, like the WRENCH, Broadway Neighbourhood Centre, Rossbrook House, RAY, Save our Seine, Green Action Centre, and more. Me and many others could go on and on and on about the value of these organizations, and the fact is it provides a lot more surplus value to the City of Winnipeg than 2.1 Million Dollars you are prepared to take from them.

Perhaps there is a need for a more organized funding application process, but this City must not move forward on any such arrangement without a commitment to preserve funding for the organizations affected (Which arguably, should be expanded and not cut, but that's another matter).

Know that you will save money in the long run on city services by investing in organizations like these.

I trust you will make the right decision today.

File:

Public engagement preference: Yes