

Winnipeg Committee for Safety

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RE: Community and Neighbourhood Grant Program

Hello Council Members,

The Winnipeg Committee for Safety (WCFS) is pleased to offer feedback and recommendations to Council regarding the Community and Neighbourhood Grant Program, which has been developed as part the 2024-2027 Multi-Year Operating and Capital Budgets and replaces the Annual Operating Grants allotted to a variety of community organizations.

We support Council in its efforts to build a safe, healthy, and happy city that supports the well-being of all residents and are happy to see the creation of a by-law to govern the new grant program's operations that ensures transparency, fairness, and compliance with legal standards. This creates established guidelines and an equitable process for applicants. However, the reduction in funds for the program for the remaining three years of the budget concerns us.

Grant programs allow communities to work on priorities important to them, often related to community safety and well-being. Receiving stable funding from the City can also leverage opportunities for provincial and/or federal government, or private sector funding.

These funds are used by neighbourhood or non-profit organizations that often rely on substantial volunteer efforts to operate programs, projects and services that provide far greater dollar value than just the program grant amount. Improved confidence, engagement, and generation of new ideas for the community also flourish where these resources are in place.

Substance use, mental health issues, and homelessness are all top-of-mind issues in our city. The repercussions of reducing funding to organizations that make up the fabric of our social safety net will not help improve community safety and well-being. Where there is the lack of a safety net, an individual will create their own, and that will usually be through crime. Winnipeg is experiencing record amounts of violent crime, so we must adequately resource all avenues that will lead to a safer city. Crime prevention happens in a variety of ways, including social development, skills building and recreation opportunities, which many of the current operating grant recipients have proven success at providing.

We ask Council to consider the risk factors reduced funding to these efforts creates for our city. We are aware these are tough economic times, but believe that increased funding of resources, especially in higher-need communities, will eventually lead to lower costs for things like policing, EMS, by-law enforcement, and health services, and can increase employment and economic growth. We encourage the exploration of all avenues for funding to ensure these necessary supports remain in place.

The WCFS thanks Council for the opportunity to provide feedback and recommendations on the Community and Neighbourhood Grant Program.