Social Planning Council *of Winnipeg*
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January 21st, 2025

Submission to:
Executive Policy Committee
Special Budget Meeting, January 22nd, 2025

Re.: In Support of Including the $628,000 Necessary to Reopen Millennium Library's Community Connections Space in the 2025 Budget

Dear Members of the Executive Policy Committee:

I would like to begin by acknowledging the increased spending on libraries of late. It is most welcome. However, they have been a munch underfunded community resource for too many years so there is still much more work to be done. While I understand that a decision was made to distribute the provincial funding envelope throughout the city's libraries in the form of a large material purchase, I am asking you to consider the other city plans, reports etc… as you move forward to a final decision on your submission. Specifically, the Strategic Priorities Action Plan, Winnipeg 2045 and the Poverty Reduction Strategy Implementation Plan. These and others speak to downtown revitalization.

Winnipeg Centre remains the federal urban riding with the highest rates of child and family poverty. The most recent and accurate data, 2022 tax-filer, demonstrates that more than 41% of Winnipeg Centre's children and their families were struggling in poverty. There is no reason to assume that the situation has improved in 2025.

The argument that the services provided in Community Connections are social services and so are the provincial governments responsibility is not accurate. Libraries have evolved over-time to meet as many needs as possible. We don't, for example, curtail use of library computers to research only. They are available to people who cannot afford a home computer or internet services so they can work to improve their lives.

In closing, I would like to point out that the Community Safety Officer program is being expanded by 15 new officers with no publicly available program evaluation data beyond largely uncritical media reports. The Community Connections space have submitted regular reports that proves how much the space and staff are able to accomplish, including answering 45% of all information requests thus freeing up other library staff to provide other library services. Therefore, please reconsider your decision to not fund the 4.2FTEs needed at the Millennium and the operating budget necessary for Community Connections totalling $628.000 for the 2025 year.

Thank you for your time and consideration. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you would like to discuss further.

Sincerely,



Kate Kehler,
Executive Director