Human Rights Committee of Council

CITY OF WINNIPEG

Human Rights Committee of Council (HRCC)

2026 Draft Workplan

(Draft for discussion)

1. Introduction

Winnipeg's Human Rights Committee of Council (HRCC) advances Council's mandate to embed human rights across municipal governance, planning, and service delivery. As a designated Human Rights City, Winnipeg's work continues to be grounded in international human rights instruments, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) to name a few. These Human Rights obligations, in addition to the Human Rights Committee of Council terms of reference shape the Committee's understanding of accountability, and the City's leadership role in promoting equity and justice.

This document provides context and detailed priorities to guide HRCC's work throughout 2026. It is proposed the 2026 Workplan builds on multi-year commitments, community engagement from the *What We Heard Report*, and Council-directed initiatives. It emphasizes a systems-based approach to human rights governance strengthening structures that ensure policy alignment, transparent decision-making, co-governance with Indigenous partners, and meaningful participation from equity deserving communities. The plan also reinforces Winnipeg's voluntary local review commitments through Peg City Indicators, integrating human rights measurement into sustainability data and municipal reporting.

The Human Rights Committee of Council (HRCC) enters 2026 with a strengthened mandate, informed by extensive community input gathered through the *What We Heard Report*, ongoing Council directives, and the City's commitments as a UCLG Human Rights City. The Committee's 2026 Workplan builds on multi-year initiatives, new partnerships, and the City's broader human rights and sustainability goals, while reinforcing institutional structures that ensure accountability, transparency, and meaningful community impact.

This workplan outlines key priorities and deliverables for 2026, organized to support Council and the public's understanding of the Human Rights Committee of Council strategic planning, the subcommittees planning, community partnership collaborative goals, and systemic change across municipal policy, budgeting, and service delivery partners in departments and work units across City government.

2. Strengthening Human Rights Structures and Governance

Human rights structures are the backbone of a Human Rights City. In 2026, HRCC will focus on deepening municipal alignment with international human rights norms, by growing partnerships, expanding human rights education activities and enhancing partnership work with Council.

This will involve embedding standards from UNDRIP in decolonizing municipal governance, aligning sustainability work with the SDGs—particularly Goals 5 (Gender Equality), 10 (Reduced Inequalities), 11 (Sustainable Cities), 13 (Climate Action), and 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions), and using human rights treaties as guidance for local decision-making.

Through strengthened structures, the HRCC aims to ensure that human rights considerations are not reactive or symbolic, but proactive, systematic, and measurable.

2.1 Institutional Integration of Human Rights

- Deepen human rights work by engaging in meaningful next steps in conducting Winnipeg's second voluntary local review in collaboration with Peg City Indicators among other partners.
- Embed human rights considerations across municipal planning and policy.
- Trial the use of Human Rights Impact Assessments (HRIAs)
  Strengthen monitoring and reporting structures, including quarterly updates and an expanded annual report to Council.

Request Council change the terms of reference for the HRCC to include and accept an internship with Environment Leadership Canada to assist in training the next generation of public service leaders with capacity in human rights issues.

2.2 HRCC Referral Mechanism

- Promote systematic use of the HRCC referral mechanism by Standing Policy Committees and Council.
- Provide increased reporting to Council on guidance and follow-up tools to SPCs to ensure HRCC advice is tracked and integrated.
- Enhance the annual report, and other communication tools to adapt Council-wide information on human rights considerations, priorities and plans, including how public service consulted the committee and the manner advice was incorporated into department decision-making. Ensure follow-up and recognition of public service efforts.

3. Community Engagement, Education, and Dialogue

Community participation is a core human rights principle recognized across international frameworks, including the ICCPR, ICESCR, UNDRIP, and SDG 16, which calls for inclusive institutions and participatory decision-making. As a Human Rights City, Winnipeg commits to meaningful engagement that ensures residents—especially from equity deserving groups—shape municipal human rights priorities. The HRCC's community engagement work is rooted in accessibility, cultural safety, and shared ownership of solutions.

In 2026, the Committee will continue to deepen its multi-year commitment to dialogue-based engagement by expanding place-based conversations, strengthening communications tools, and ensuring transparent reporting back to communities and Council.

3.1 Quarterly Dialogue Series (with the exception in 2026 during the writ /election period)

- Deliver four community-hosted dialogue sessions in neighbourhood-based settings.
- Focus on inclusion for Indigenous communities, newcomers, youth, disability advocates, ethno-cultural groups, and 2SLGBTQIA+ residents.
- Produce public reports summarizing findings and recommendations.

3.2 Public Education & Communications

- Expand earned media, social media, and research partnerships to increase awareness of municipal human rights initiatives, plans, and priorities.
  Issue annual summaries of dialogue themes, human rights trends, and local challenges and work;
- Develop plain-language briefings for the public service providers, community, and Council.

3.3 2025–21 Dialogue Series Continuation

- Continue the multi-year dialogue series launched in 2025, including thematic dialogues on housing, public safety, climate justice, economic equity, food security, and emergency management.
- Collaborate with Rainbow Resource Centre, Ma Mawi, Harvest, Fillipino Community, Iranian Community, Sudanese Community among others, and Compassionate Cities Network on co-hosted and/or collaborative events.

4. Thematic Priorities for 2026

HRCC's thematic priorities for 2026 reflect both international human rights obligations and commitments as well as national and local planning:

4.1 Decolonizing Human Rights

Decolonizing human rights remains foundational to HRCC's mandate. UNDRIP affirms the right of Indigenous peoples to participate in all decisions affecting them, and municipal governments the closest to daily community life hold particular responsibility to advance these rights through co-governance, shared decision-making, and culturally grounded policy development.

In 2026, HRCC will continue strengthening its partnerships with Indigenous leaders, the Indigenous Relations Division (IRD), Entitlement First Nations, Metis and Inuit governments and organizations such as Ma Mawi, Indigenous Executive Circle, as well as Indigenous knowledge keepers. The Committee will support and amplify the ongoing co-development of the biodiversity policy, and

consider emergency management approaches that reflect Indigenous laws, teachings, and relationship-based governance models.

Advance co-development and co-governance structures and initiatives with Indigenous governments, and leaders.

- Initiated in 2025, strengthen relationships by partnering on joint learning activities with human rights organizations in the Philippines and Korea.

4.2 Gender-Based Violence Prevention & MMIWG2S Calls for Justice

Preventing gender-based violence is a core obligation under CEDAW, UNDRIP (Articles 7 and 22), and the MMIWG2S Calls for Justice, which set out actionable pathways for all levels of government. As a Human Rights City, Winnipeg has committed to supporting safety, dignity, and justice for Indigenous women, girls, and gender-diverse people.

The HRCC's work in 2026 will continue to operationalize these obligations by advancing public education, aligning municipal actions with Calls for Justice, and prioritizing safety initiatives across public spaces, nightlife, and transit systems.

- Deepen collaboration with IRD, Gaagigewewag, Ma Mawi, and EFN.
- Support public education efforts including expanded use of the *Can You See Us?* campaign.
- Focus on safety in public spaces, nightlife, and transit. // NOTE: continue with comprehensive content across remaining thematic areas...
- Partnership with UN Safe Cities.

4.3 Accessibility, Universal Design & Disability Rights

Disability rights are affirmed in the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) and SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities), which highlight accessibility, inclusion, and equal participation. Municipal governments play a critical role in creating barrier-free environments and ensuring access to public services.

In 2026, HRCC will continue advancing accessibility as a cornerstone of human rights governance. This includes supporting Council-directed accessibility initiatives, strengthening universal design practices, and ensuring that residents with disabilities—especially Deaf and Hard of Hearing communities—help shape City policies and emergency preparedness systems.

4.4 Housing, Homelessness & the Right to Adequate Shelter

The right to housing is recognized in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) and reinforced by SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities) and SDG 1 (No Poverty). Winnipeg's housing and homelessness crisis underscores the urgency for a human rights–based approach rooted in dignity, equity, and community safety.

In 2026, HRCC will deepen partnerships with advocacy organizations, Indigenous service providers, among other partners to advance housing as a human right. This includes a Housing Dialogue and contributing to systems-level work on homelessness prevention with partners.

4.5 Newcomer Inclusion, Safety & Belonging

International human rights law affirms the rights of migrants, refugees, and newcomers to safety, participation, and non-discrimination. Locally, newcomer communities remain vulnerable to exploitation, racism, language barriers, and exclusion. In 2026, the HRCC will expand partnerships with Immigration Partnership Winnipeg and community-based agencies to promote newcomer inclusion through public education, safety campaigns, and culturally grounded events.

4.6 2SLGBTQIA+ Inclusion, Safety & Equity

The Yogyakarta Principles and SDG 10 reinforce the right to live free from discrimination based on sexual orientation, gender identity, or expression. Winnipeg, as a Human Rights City, affirms these protections and commits to strengthening inclusive policies and community partnerships.

HRCC's 2025 partnership work with Rainbow Resource Centre will continue by advancing 2SLGBTQIA+ inclusion through research, dialogue initiatives, and collaboration. In 2026 this will include structured knowledge sharing with the City, community and council.

4.7 Anti-Racism, Hate Prevention & Social Cohesion

The International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD) and SDG 16 call for strong institutions that actively prevent hate, discrimination, and violence. Municipal leadership is essential in building social cohesion and counteracting rising hate incidents.

In 2026, HRCC will strengthen monitoring, education, and policy development related to anti-racism and hate prevention, including supporting the creation of Winnipeg's first municipal hate prevention strategy.

4.8 Social Determinants of Health & Community Well-being

Human rights to health, housing, food, and adequate living standards are recognized under ICESCR and embedded within SDGs 1, 2, and 3. Addressing the social determinants of health requires collaboration across governments and community sectors.

Throughout 2026, HRCC will continue working with Harvest and Ma Mawi along with partnerships organizations building on the phase 1 work in 2025 to address food security, income equity, community safety, and the underlying conditions that shape health disparities.

4.9 Human Rights Recognition, Awards & Civic Leadership

Celebrating human rights leadership is consistent with SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals) and strengthens civic participation, volunteerism, and community innovation.

In 2026, HRCC will work to explore awards and recognition event that would recognize outstanding contributions to human rights advancement by reconnecting with HRCC alumni, community volunteers, and individuals or organizations demonstrating exceptional leadership to consider what shape an awards framework could take.

4.10 International Engagement & Human Rights City Leadership

As part of the global Human Rights Cities movement, Winnipeg participates in international exchanges grounded in the UDHR, UNDRIP, the SDGs, and shared municipal best practices.

HRCC will continue international engagement in 2026, including contributing to the World Human Rights Cities Forum, sharing Winnipeg's human rights budgeting and evaluation tools abroad, and advancing knowledge exchange with partner cities.

4.11 Climate Justice, Biodiversity & Co-Governance

Climate justice is recognized in SDGs 13 (Climate Action) and 15 (Life on Land), and is inseparable from Indigenous rights under UNDRIP. Municipal climate governance must prioritize equity, intergenerational justice, and Indigenous leadership.

In 2026, HRCC—supported by a dedicated Human Rights Committee of Council Climate Intern in partnership with Climate Action will continue co-development work with Indigenous partners on biodiversity, climate adaptation, and nature-based solutions. Dialogue sessions will highlight Indigenous-led climate governance, emergency management maturity, and food sovereignty.

Age-Friendly Winnipeg & Older Adult Rights Focus

An age-friendly city aligns with the World Health Organization's Global Age-Friendly Cities Framework, the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, and SDGs 3 and 11, which emphasize inclusion, accessibility, and healthy, connected communities for all generations.

Winnipeg's older adults consistently highlight safety, mobility, housing, transportation, accessibility, and social inclusion as priority human rights concerns.

In 2026, HRCC will continue the work to elevate Age-Friendly work as a standalone priority aligned with Council direction and within the motion as directed to inform the update of the Age-Friendly guide. The Committee will:

- Lead Age-Friendly consultations, surveys, and engagement sessions across neighbourhoods.
- Develop updated Age-Friendly community-informed materials.
- Partner with community organizations in particular ethno-cultural organizations in community serving older adults to identify emerging human rights concerns.
- Support accessibility upgrades in partnership with Council on public spaces and City buildings, including advancing the Wheelchair Accessibility Symbol.
- Consider recommendations where cross-department collaboration can work to ensure Age-Friendly principles better inform municipal planning, programming, and infrastructure.

This focus recognizes aging as a human rights issue and reaffirms Winnipeg's commitment to creating an accessible, inclusive, and supportive city for all older adults.

6. Conclusion

Winnipeg's commitment to becoming a leading Human Rights City is both ambitious and essential. The HRCC's 2026 Workplan strengthens municipal structures, deepens community partnerships, and advances equity across all areas of civic life. The priorities outlined in this plan reflect the voices of residents, the direction of Council, and some of the urgent human rights challenges facing our city.

Throughout 2026, the HRCC will continue fostering inclusive governance, transparent reporting, collaborative problem-solving, and meaningful participation from communities most affected by human rights inequities. The Committee's role remains clear: to help ensure that human rights considerations are embedded in municipal decision-making, that our systems become more just and accountable, and that Winnipeg continues to grow as a compassionate, sustainable, and rights respecting city.