



**Presentation to City Council by Heritage Community Association
2018 Budget Meeting
February 27, 2018**

Mayor Fougere, City Councillors, and City Administration:

I am here on behalf of the Heritage Community Association to provide feedback on the proposed budget. Specifically, I want to underline the importance of funding to Community Associations and the Community Investment Grants program, and to encourage you to invest in the revitalization of City recreation facilities including community pools.

Community Associations do an incredible amount work for and with the people of this city – from social and recreational programming to community clean-ups to providing the City with valuable input on development in our neighbourhoods. Funding to our Community Association has remained at the same amount for over a decade, with no increase for inflation. While we are grateful to the City's ongoing support, a funding model that does not adjust for inflation is unsustainable in the long run. We also understand that, as our city grows, there are neighbourhoods interested in forming new Community Associations.

We respectfully request that City Council consider increasing funding to Community Associations in order to accommodate for inflation and the establishment of new Community Associations.

The **Community Investment Grants** program is vital to our programming. Funding from the Community Investment Grants program supports our after-school children's cooking classes, and our annual Harvest Moon Festival, which celebrates the cultural diversity and artistic vibrancy of the Heritage neighbourhood. The hundreds of community programs and projects like these that are funded by Community Investment Grants provide critical social, recreational and cultural programming. They can make the difference for some young people between, for example, becoming an artist and joining a gang, as one participant in the All Nations Healin' Thru Artz program explained in the recent *Leader-Post* article about that program, which recently lost most of its funding following restructuring at INAC.

As Regina's cultural and non-profit community grows, there has been increased demand on public funding. There are many needs in our communities that are going unmet as a result. We urge you to consider an increase that at least matches the increase in demand, so that non-profit and community-based organizations can continue to deliver the high-quality, accessible social, recreational and cultural programming that is so vital to the safety, health and vibrancy of our communities.

We also want to emphasize the importance of **community pools and other community recreation facilities**, particularly in lower-income neighbourhoods like ours. These facilities, including Maple Leaf Pool in our neighbourhood, provide vital free recreation opportunities for families and young people who otherwise may not have anywhere safe to go. In communities where many people face multiple barriers (including transportation and financial) to accessing recreational programming, community pools and other free or low-cost recreation facilities and programs are not just about having a fun time (though that's an important impact too); they also prevent social isolation and boredom, provide a safe outlet for physical energy, support mental health, and significantly reduce the stress of single parents and parents with low income. As the only free recreation facility in our neighbourhood, Maple Leaf Pool is full from open to close, every day, all summer long.

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On page 7 of the proposed budget, under Risks, it states that “The effort to maintain low user fees and property taxes in the past has created a backlog of needed asset renewal. This gap has the potential to create risks to the quality or consistency of our services.” Earlier, on page 6, it also states, “as the financial constraint of the recent economic downturn becomes a reality, the City must avoid returning to the previous choices and burdening future generations with the cost of renewing assets that are being used today.”

We understand that this budget proposes \$200,000 in capital expenses for outdoor pools, and that this amount is only meant for emergent structural issues with high risk of failure. We believe that our pools require more than this, and that if proper investment in their maintenance and revitalization is not made now, time and neglect will continue to take their toll and eventually render our pools unsafe or unusable. This would be a devastating loss for our community. We provided this same feedback during the consultations for the Recreation Master Plan, which we know will be released soon.

Mayor Fougere and City Councillors, as the Recreation Master Plan reaches its completion, and as you consider the proposed 2018 budget, we urge you to push for significant investment in the renewal of the City’s outdoor pools.

Thank you for listening, and I am happy to answer any questions.

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