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November 23, 2018

Reply to: Louis A. Browne  
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City of Regina

Re: Council Remuneration

Dear Regina City Council,

Thank you for the opportunity to share my perspective with you.

I will cover these topics:

1. Our Vision and its significance
2. Why a chart of numbers is almost useless in determining Council's remuneration
3. The dangerous democracy deficit
4. A ball and chain versus a shot of adrenaline
5. The fundamental question we have to ask ourselves
6. Some further potential recommendations

By way of background, I had the extreme honour of serving as a Regina City Councillor from 2006 – 2012 at which point I retired from City Hall.

Since that time, I've gladly deferred to the subsequent Councils in all matters relating to City Hall. I've not made any official submissions to any committee or presented at City Council...until now.



## 1. Our Vision and its significance

I'd like to start with our official Vision for Regina:

"Canada's most vibrant, inclusive, attractive, sustainable community, where people live in harmony and thrive in opportunity."

This is not a meek statement. It is not a mild, mediocre or weak statement. It is bold, and nothing less would be acceptable for the capital city of Saskatchewan in my opinion.

However, our treatment of our City Councillors by way of remuneration is weak. And, needless to say I fully appreciate the precarious position that you are in when considering your own compensation as elected servants.

On the other hand, I am not in a precarious position and can speak freely as one of the very few people in this city who actually understands what a Councillor does, and it is an awful lot. I have no skin in this game. I have no intention of returning to City Hall, as I am thoroughly enjoying the private sector as a partner with the law firm Willows Wellsch Orr & Brundige LLP.

There were deficiencies in the previous framework. None of the esteemed people on the previous Remuneration Review Commission appear to have had any experience as City Council members. In other words, they did not personally know what the job entails.

## 2. Why a chart of numbers is almost useless in determining Council's remuneration

I further respectfully suggest that the correct answer to Council remuneration cannot be addressed by looking at a chart. While it may be helpful to know what another city in another province pays their Council members, that cannot be the end of the analysis. I'll take Mississauga, Ontario as an example. I don't know what they pay their Council members, but what is their vision for their community? Is it as bold as ours?

Is Mississauga the capital of Ontario? No.

Regina and Saskatoon share a leadership role for all cities in Saskatchewan. Does Mississauga play a similar leadership role for Ontario's cities as Regina does for Saskatchewan? Again, the answer is "No".

Regina is in a competition for talented and ambitious people, as are all cities. Who are we competing against? One of our competitors due to proximity is Calgary. Is Mississauga competing with Calgary, like we are? While they have their own competition, the answer to this question is "No".

What are Regina's challenges and opportunities? Whatever they might be, are Mississauga's the same? No, they are not.

Do Ontario provincial governments tend to support their cities, such as Mississauga, in ways that may differ from how our provincial government regards cities, or Regina in particular?

These are just a few of the differences between Regina and Mississauga which come to mind over the course of a few minutes of reflection. They illustrate the futility in looking at a chart to determine what Regina's Council remuneration should be.

### 3. The dangerous democracy deficit

Another grave concern with the status quo is the massive democracy deficit which the low Councillor remuneration creates. Former Councillor Shawn Fraser while explaining why he was not seeking re-election was quoted in the paper remarking on this very subject and I concur. The low Councillor remuneration and the ever increasing demands on Councillors, means that a massive percentage of the population cannot functionally be Councillors.

Teachers and nurses as examples and the vast majority of full-time employees are not eligible to be Councillors in a realistic sense. Basically, the people who are eligible to be Regina City Councillors are self-employed (as I was), retired, independently wealthy or those fortunate enough to have a very flexible boss. Needless to say, the health or Regina's local democracy should not be contingent on the generosity of one's boss.



#### 4. A ball and chain versus a shot of adrenaline

I recall a brief conversation I had with then City Manager, Glen Davies. I asked him whether he had any comments on part-time vs. full-time Councillors. He noted that with part-time Councillors, the City is slowed down in terms of moving forward.

#### 5. The fundamental question we have to ask ourselves

At some point, Regina will have to move to greatly enhanced compensation for our Councillors in particular. The fundamental question we have to ask ourselves is what league do we want to play in? Do we want to play in the Bush leagues or do we want to play in the major leagues? This is certainly not a critique of current or past Councillors, but rather an observation that our current and past Councillors have not been empowered to dedicate themselves to City Hall. Other than our retired Councillors, there's always a tug-of-war between our Council demands and those of our day jobs. If we moved to full-time Councillors, we could sustain a decrease in the number of Councillors from 10 to 6 - 8.

#### 6. Some further potential recommendations

Respectfully suggested additional recommendations to address the above concerns:

4. That the Administration's report regarding the Salary Review Commission, include reference to Regina's Vision, the role which Councillors play in realizing our Vision, and the unique factors which distinguish Regina from all other cities in the world.

5. That the Administration's report regarding the Salary Review Commission, will require said Commission to include/seek the feedback and input from former Regina Mayors, Councillors, City Managers, and others deemed to have relevant knowledge and practical insights.

6. That the Administration's report regarding the Salary Review Commission, will require said Commission on a preliminary basis to consider an option to transition to fewer full-time Councillors.

7. That the Administration's report regarding the Salary Review Commission, will require said Commission to consider the support budgets for Councillors regarding communications with the public, attending local events and attending relevant conferences such as SUMA & FCM.

All of which is respectfully and humbly submitted.

Sincerely,

**WILLOWS WELLSCH ORR & BRUNDIGE LLP**

Per:   
for Louis A. Browne

LAB:tdc