

**City of Regina
2019 Budget Submission**

Dear Mayor and Council,

My name is Jim Elliott and I have been submitting comments and concerns to each of the last 20 years of budget submissions put forward to you. This year is no different. What is different is the fundamental problems with the direction of the spending.

A number of general observations

1. Time for Public Review of Budget Getting Shorter

The time given to the public to review this document has decreased over time to this year's time period of 27 days, with only 20 days to have your response to the City Clerk. For most of the taxpayers of Regina, the time for engagement in the budgeting process is far too short to fully engage most people in Regina. Participatory Budgeting¹ (PB) is a specific type of engagement process where city residents propose and vote on community investment projects, funded through a pre-determined portion of the municipal budget. Some cities have given over the development of the entire budget to the community. As a way to more effectively engage the community in their community a sum of 2 Million dollars of this budget be set aside for a participatory budget initiative. And give the citizens the ability to determine where that money goes, not Council.

2. Time for Presentation of Comments Shortens

This year the respondents before you will not have the opportunity to address each portion of the budget separately but will have to comment collectively in a shortened period of 5 minutes. The inability to address the budget projections to the various bodies such as the Regina Police Commission, the Regina Public Library Board, the Public Capital Commission Board, the Regina School Boards, the Buffalo Pound Water Treatment Plant Board or the REAL Board or their respective staff cuts out the capacity of the resident to question and get answers from those that are billing them for their budgets. And if you want to comment on two budgets, time is further curtailed.

3. Information in Budget Document Decreasing

The details in this document are limiting and does not allow for investigation without additional time and energy to gather those details. Of those 148 pages, 24 are either blank, title pages or front and back pages. Ten pages are the utility rate policies. Six pages identify Financial Structure, Policy and Process Fund Structure.

¹ <http://go.worldbank.org/04UJZ150J0> and www.legacy.oise.utoronto.ca/research/edu20/documents/PB_Guelph_PLS.pdf

Year	Number of Pages
2019	148
2018	179
2017	205
2016	220
2015	201
2014	293
2013	296
2012	332
2010	312

4. Money for Community Investments Declining

The monies used to support community associations and organizations that provide arts, cultural, recreation, and community services in this city is still not keeping up with inflation or other costs. From 2006 to 2016, the amount provided has increased 1.51% over those 10 years, not 1.51% per year but 1.51% over ten years or 0.151% per year

Year	Community Investment Budget	Variance
2006	3.3095 M	-
2007	3.3095 M	\$0
2008	3.3095 M	\$0
2009	3.3095 M	\$0
2010	3.3017 M	\$(7,800)
2011	3.3017 M	\$0
2012	3.3911 M	\$91,100
2013	3.3911 M	\$0
2014	3.3596 M	\$(31,500)
2015	3.3596 M	\$0
2016	3.3596 M	\$0
2017	3.7796 M	\$420,000
2018	4.0456 M ²	\$598,700
2019	3.7456 M	\$(300,000) ³

5. Public Engagement on Operations Limiting Public Input

The City has always said that citizen engagement be a part of their works with stakeholders, community organizations and partners but clearly does not want to fully engage the public in their decisions. One has to only reflect on the changes to public engagement over the last few years whether that by limiting the public to express their views at Council or committee meetings or pushing public engagement onto surveys, web-based polls or a limiting website is positive or not. The disconnect between residents and their government is growing for those with

² Actual expenditures for 2018 were 3.7258 M.

³ The expenditure budget for 2019 is \$19,800 above the actual expenditures of 2018 or 0.53% increase over 2018 assuming that the budget is utilized fully.

lower incomes, lacking computer access and generally not being capable of getting the information needed to provide advice as well as the capacity to provide that advice.

6. Ongoing Infrastructure Gap Widening

There continues to be a significant “infrastructure gap”. As outlined in the 2014-2018 General Capital Investment Program document, the City has identified a significant funding shortfall in its infrastructure requirements over the next ten years. Continuing delays in addressing the infrastructure gap will cause that gap to continue to grow. The infrastructure gap only looks at the need to renew and replace existing infrastructure, however capital requirements from growth, in particular the need for road network improvements, also have an impact on the budget. Furthermore, maintenance and renewal of growth related infrastructure is typically unfunded in annual budgets due to more urgent needs, resulting in an increase in the backlog of infrastructure work the City must eventually tackle.

7. City Footprint Growth Not Sustainable

This budget still supports growth rather than supporting resilience and sustainability. There is no inherent relationship between increasing population and the growth of the footprint of this city. It is simply an acceptance and an adherence to a model of urban planning from the 1950’s where the developer builds and the citizens are expected to pick up the tab. It is an inability to change or unwillingness to work on changing the model of development. It is also a development community that has become unwilling to change. This coupled with a cheap energy policy has externalized the true cost of urban sprawl. We must reign in urban sprawl or as this budget calls it, managed growth or the system will eventually collapse. It is not a matter of if but only of when. And we saw a glimpse of when this past week with the power outage.

8. Residential Taxpayers Paying Growing Proportion of Taxes

The tax ratio between commercial and residential properties has gone from 56/44 (R/C) in 1996 to 64/36 (R/C) in 2012 and to an unknown percentage in 2019. So the residential taxpayer has been increasingly placed with the higher tax burden. Assuming the ratio of 2012 for the year 2019, the added burden placed on the residential taxpayer by increasing that residential/commercial ratio is \$18.725 Million dollars.

9. Waste Problem Not Being Solved

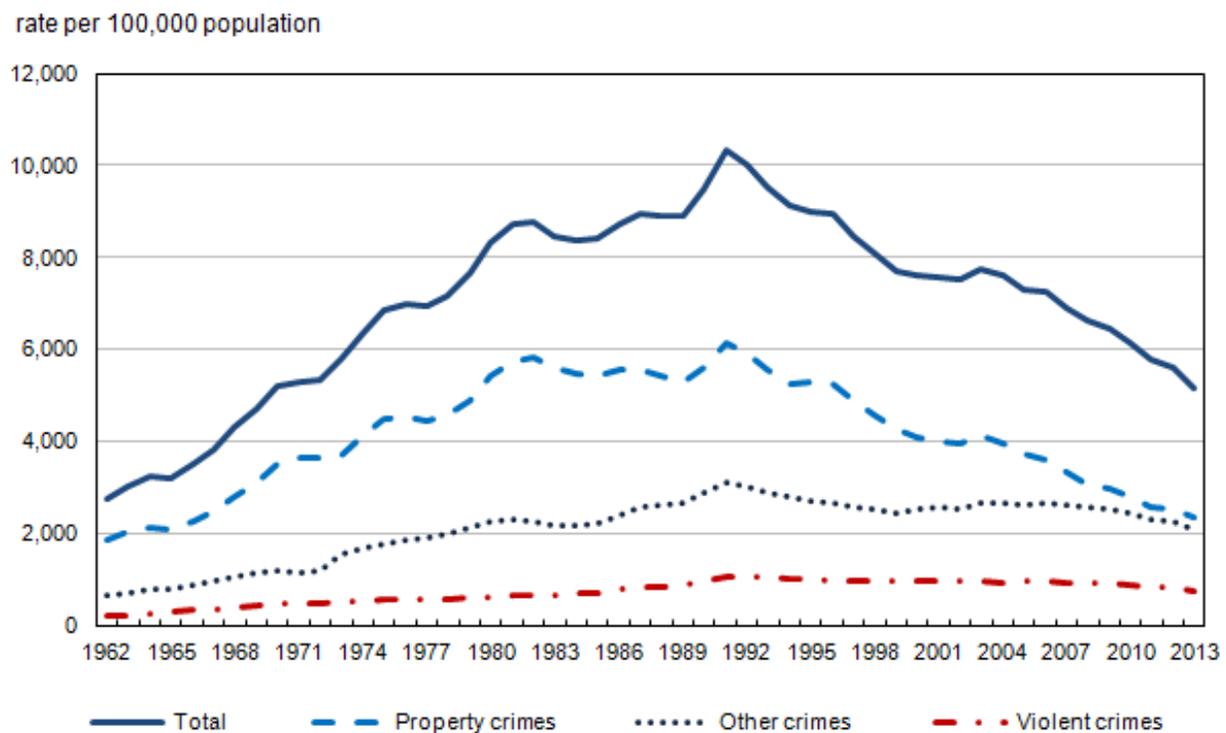
In 2010, this city spent \$31.22 Million on waste collection and landfill management. This budget year the City of Regina will be spending \$35.023 Million on waste collection and landfill management. Are we reducing our waste generation and subsequent costs? Are we better off today? When will there be no costs in our city budget for waste collection and landfill management? What should be the direction of this waste issue be? When are we going to have full waste diversion from the landfill and be able to shut it down?

Waste elimination coupled with directive procurement practices should be the direction of this Council and predictable if incentivized and prescriptive correctly. One example of this is the elimination of bottled water sales in civic facilities coupled with water filling stations and water fountains⁴. As some grocery stores have pushed for the elimination or reduction of plastic bags, we have reduced waste and our dependence on petrochemical based products.

10. Police Budget Increases Don't Meet Reality

In 2010, the Regina Police Service budget was \$58.6 Million. Today, they are projected to be \$92.426 Million. When one looks at the Police-reported crime rate in Canada over the last 51 years and more specifically for Regina for 2016 to 2017 where the Crime Severity Index and Crime Rate has shown an eleven and seven percent reduction respectively, why is the budget continuing to go up? And if the approach isn't consistent with the changes, then the funds should be sent to areas that will have significant benefits to the community.

Chart 1
Police-reported crime rate, Canada, 1962 to 2013



Note: Information presented in this chart represents data from the aggregate Uniform Crime Reporting Survey, and permits historical comparisons back to 1962. New definitions of crime categories were introduced in 2009 and are only available in the new format back to 1998. As a result, numbers in this chart will not match data released in the new format.

Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Uniform Crime Reporting Survey.

⁴ <https://canadians.org/bluecommunities>

Table 3⁵**Police-reported Crime Severity Index and crime rate, by census metropolitan area**

There is a checkbox for every column in the following table. If the checkbox is checked, then the associated column will be available.

Census metropolitan area	2017 – Crime Severity Index	2016 to 2017 – Crime Severity Index	2017 – Crime rate	2016 to 2017 – Crime rate
	index	% change	rate	% change
Canada	72.9	2	5,334	1
St. John's	66.8	-15	5,196	-9
Halifax	64.4	4	4,993	7
Moncton	85.8	15	7,241	17
Saint John	56.5	3	4,569	4
Saguenay	55.4	-2	3,295	-1
Québec	48.5	8	3,193	7
Sherbrooke	51.9	3	3,347	1
Trois-Rivières	53.1	10	3,290	12
Montréal	58.2	0 ⁶	3,363	-1
Gatineau	56.7	1	3,656	-1
Ottawa	50.8	0 ⁷	3,555	2
Kingston	61.2	11	5,060	7
Peterborough	53.4	-3	4,172	-2
Toronto	48.7	3	3,115	5
Hamilton	58.4	9	3,857	9
St. Catharines–Niagara	56.2	12	3,781	7
Kitchener–Cambridge–Waterloo	69.9	14	5,205	11
Brantford	86.3	-1	6,131	-1
Guelph	64.3	15	4,942	9
London	69.9	3	5,592	2
Windsor	71.7	7	4,705	6
Barrie	45.3	0 ⁸	3,501	-2
Greater Sudbury	83.5	25	5,575	21
Thunder Bay	85.7	1	6,072	-3
Winnipeg	106.9	4	6,991	5

⁵ <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/180723/t003b-eng.htm>

⁶ Value rounded to 0 (zero) where there is a meaningful distinction between true zero and the value that was rounded.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

Regina	111.9	-11	8,681	-7
Saskatoon	115.0	-1	8,694	-3
Calgary	81.8	6	5,588	2
Edmonton	112.3	5	8,614	5

11. Taxpayers Holding the Bag for Developers Costs

Growth doesn't pay for growth over the long haul....

- Costs associated with the construction of new infrastructure
 - a. Largely covered by developers; 25% covered by property taxes
- Costs associated with service delivery in new neighbourhoods
 - a. Partially covered by new property taxes
- Costs associated with ensuring sufficient resources to maintain and renew the core infrastructure of new neighbourhoods
 - a. Not covered

These words were made by the former City Manager on February 12, 2014 as part of his Budget Context and Background. His notes on this data were the following:

Costs associated with service delivery – garbage collection, winter road maintenance, fire and police service, park maintenance, etc.

Comparing the revenues generated by growth to the costs associated with growth, a pattern has emerged suggesting that they don't line up. As new properties are added, services can be absorbed for a period of time.

For example, each garbage route can absorb a few new households with minimal cost increase. But, at some point a whole new route needs to be added, with the need for new equipment and additional personnel. Service growth costs tend to escalate in a repeating cycle where they grow slowly for a few years and then jump in a larger step. In the past several years, growth revenues have generally been about the same as growth related costs (providing the same services to more people/households). In 2011, a significant jump in costs occurred – growth related costs grew by \$4.7 million, while growth related property tax revenues grew by only \$2.6 million. Over time, such "jumps" mean that on average property taxes don't cover the costs associated with growth.

Costs associated with ensuring sufficient resources to maintain and renew the core infrastructure of new neighbourhoods. All infrastructure eventually requires renewal. Best practice to ensure that resources are available to pay for this renewal is to set aside a bit of money in reserve each year from the first year of operation of the new infrastructure. However, because new property taxes do not fully cover the cost of new services, no money is being set aside to cover the cost of renewing growth infrastructure.

12. Last Year's Surplus Not Going to Reduce This Year's Taxes

On September 4, 2018, the City of Regina is projecting surpluses in its general operating fund and its utility fund to reach a combined \$6.5 million, according to the mid-year financial update. The operating fund looks like it will have a \$2 million surplus, as unfilled staffing vacancies offset decreased revenue in other areas.⁹ In October, 2017, the City of Regina collecting on \$7 million in unpaid parking fines. The City of Regina has been pursuing close to 20,000 accounts with outstanding fines.¹⁰

13. Protecting Wascana Park from Commercial Development

In the budget, there is an expenditure of \$1.5 million for the design of a new outdoor Destination Aquatic Facility with an additional \$15 million in 2020 and 2021 for construction. The language used in this project is steeped in corporate branding, in commercial corporate tourism and ripe for the introduction of the third private development built in Wascana Centre that does not serve the needs of, or benefit those using the current park.

A motion was passed only a few months ago at the Regina City Council meeting on August 27, 2018

Councillor Bob Hawkins moved, seconded by Councillor Lori Bresciani, that:

1. City Council commit to protecting Wascana Centre from future commercial development that does not directly serve the needs of, or benefits those using the park.
2. A letter be sent on behalf of City Council from Mayor Michael Fougere to the Government of Saskatchewan and the Provincial Capital Commission opposing future commercial development in Wascana Centre that does not meet the recommendations in the Master Plan and has not undergone full public consultation.
3. In view of *The Provincial Capital Commission Act* that significantly changed the governance of Wascana Centre, Regina City Council requests the Provincial Capital Commission to commence a public consultation process that addresses the future development, stewardship and governance of Wascana Centre.

14. A Spray Pad is not a Maple Leaf Pool

The inherent and relentless push from the City Administration to close all outdoor pools, especially Maple Leaf (this year) and Dewdney Pools (Dewdney isn't closing yet but the clock is ticking) shows a naivety about the value that this single recreational opportunity has for inner city youth in this neighbourhood. To think that families will simply put their school age or younger children onto a city bus so that they can be bused to another pool does not show an understanding of child safety. This "solution" is not equivalent to children walking a few blocks with friends and neighbours within their own neighbourhood.

⁹ <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/saskatchewan/city-of-regina-surplus-funding-into-reserves-1.4809459>

¹⁰ <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/saskatchewan/parking-tickets-letters-regina-1.4344799>

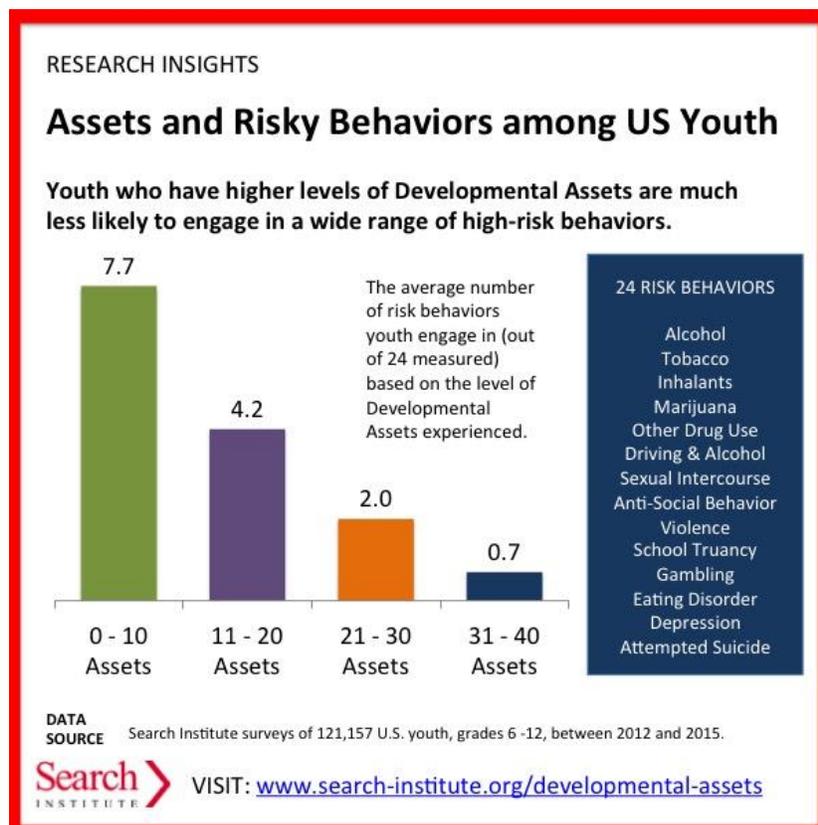
And as if we need to put another spray pad only 7 blocks from another one will somehow enhance the time in the summer for youth is almost laughable. But we know that we need to do more, not less, making it better. We need to stop allowing our recreational infrastructure to deteriorate to a point that it has to be closed because of physical safety issues.

We need to be spending the \$1.5 Million on the redesign of Maple Leaf Pool and the \$15 Million on a new Maple Leaf Pool.

We need to be building and investing in the social capital of our children and families through the structure called Asset Building¹¹.

On one level, the 40 Developmental Assets represent common wisdom about the kinds of positive supports and strengths young people need. But extensive research reveals that assets can have a powerful influence on adolescent behavior. By juxtaposing the challenge of reducing risky behaviors with the positive model of the Developmental Asset framework, Search Institute offers communities a hopeful vision for addressing the challenges in part through building strengths and resilience in young people's lives. (For an example of one community's story, see [Signs of Progress in Putting Children First.](#))

Reducing Risks—the Protective Power of Assets: In addition to measuring Developmental Assets, the [Attitudes and Behaviors survey](#) also measures levels of high-risk behaviors, including the use of tobacco, alcohol, other drugs, violence, and early sexual involvement. Youth with low asset levels (0-10 assets) engage, on average, in 7.7 of 24 risk behaviors, compared to 0.7 risk behaviors among youth who experience 31-40 assets.¹²



¹¹ <https://www.search-institute.org/tools-resources/free-downloads/>

¹² <https://www.search-institute.org/our-research/development-assets/current-research-development-assets/>

15. Eliminate the Cosmetic Use of Pesticides in Parks

Since 2010, Regina instituted a limited pesticide ban in three parks by designating them as pesticide-free¹³. There has been a pilot plan for the past 8 years. If this administration had intentions to phase out the cosmetic use of pesticides in parks, we would have done this by now.

The Canadian Cancer Society supports a ban on pesticides used to improve the appearance of green spaces. The cosmetic use of pesticides provides no health benefit and may cause harm.¹⁴

16. OCP Transportation Choices 5.3 - Develop achievable mode share targets for city-wide and area-specific travel, reflecting a more multi-modal city and emphasizing walking, cycling, car-pooling and transit on a year-round basis.

In the budget document, there is planning for bike lanes and multi-use pathway programs.¹⁵ Over the past 23 years, the City of Regina has developed 4 small bike lane networks in the downtown. Since the initial series of bike lanes, there has only been 10 blocks of pathways put down on the road. To implement the full network of bike lanes in 25 years, as defined in the transportation master plan¹⁶, there will need to be more than planning done each year. Although it may be beneficial to work on expanding the off street bikeways, the cost of implementing the on street bike lanes is less expensive per kilometre built. The currently proposed priority network is also very disjointed and not sufficient to support active commuting.

17. OCP Transportation Choices 5.13 - Maximize the accessibility of the conventional transit system while ensuring the paratransit system meets the needs of those unable to use the conventional system.

With this year's budget, there does not appear to be any further enhancement of the paratransit system to meet the growing number of paratransit users. Further, the number of years of refusals the paratransit users have had to endure should force the City of Regina to provide a significantly expanded service delivery in order to get frustrated riders to ask for more service and be as active as the regular users of the transit system.

18. Return Paratransit to Become an In House Program

A number of years ago, at the time when the privatization of paratransit was first being considered, there was a study of the costs of private provision of paratransit and the return of paratransit to being done by city employees and the same employees hired to maintain the transit buses. It was estimated that the City of Regina and its taxpayers could save themselves \$7.5 Million dollars. With the

¹³ <https://www.regina.ca/residents/parks/find-field-park/pesticide-free-parks/>

¹⁴ <http://www.cancer.ca/en/prevention-and-screening/reduce-cancer-risk/make-informed-decisions/be-safe-at-work/the-canadian-cancer-societys-perspective-on-pesticides/?region=sk>

¹⁵ Page 118.

¹⁶ <http://www.designregina.ca/transportation-master-plan-2/>

planned provision of the new bus barn, this option should be taken to both save money now but save money later.

19. Active Transportation Needs More Support Not Less

In order to deal with the six priorities put into the Official Community Plan, that being creating better, more active ways of getting around; promoting conservation, stewardship, and environmental sustainability; achieving long-term financial viability; foster economic prosperity; and optimizing regional cooperation, and to maximize the benefits to Regina residents, active transportation will act on all of these priorities. More funds spent in supporting walking, cycling¹⁷ and public transportation will both maintain and enhance the health and resilience of our community and its residents. Current transportation planning practices tend to undercount and undervalue walking.¹⁸

An increase of \$31,600 dollars over last year's Total General Operating Expenditures¹⁹ will not even maintain the service necessary for this city.

20. Arcola Avenue Corridor Study²⁰ Should Not Include Bridge Widening

There is a proverb, 'if you build it, they will come'. When you widen a bridge or add an additional lane to an expressway, the facts are clear, the intended reduction in congestion will not happen.

On an expressway in Jakarta, they were building another 6 lanes to reduce the congestion on the first four lanes. Those first four lanes actually had 6 lanes of traffic. Once the new expressway was built, you now had 12 lanes of congestion instead of just 6.

The concept is called induced demand, which is economist-speak for when increasing the supply of something (like roads) makes people want that thing even more. Though some traffic engineers made note of this phenomenon at least as early as the 1960s, it is only in recent years that social scientists have collected enough data to show how this happens pretty much every time we build new roads. These findings imply that the ways we traditionally go about trying to mitigate jams are essentially fruitless, and that we'd all be spending a lot less time in traffic if we could just be a little more rational.²¹

A more likely explanation, Turner and Duranton argue, is what they call the fundamental law of road congestion: New roads will create new drivers, resulting in the intensity of traffic staying the same.²²

¹⁷ <https://www.strongtowns.org/journal/2016/5/10/the-economic-benefits-of-biking-cannot-be-ignored>

¹⁸ www.vtpi.org/walkability.pdf

¹⁹ Page 56.

²⁰ Page 116.

²¹ <https://www.wired.com/2014/06/wuwt-traffic-induced-demand/>

²² <http://www.nber.org/papers/w15376>

Recommendations

1. Provide an extended participatory budgeting procedure in which residents are given further details and the capacity to review and question the details and programs outlined in the budget.
2. Expand the time for presentations to 10 minutes. Broadcast live all committee and council meetings on Facebook or a dedicated internet site. Provide a dedicated day prior to the budget meeting for the public to make statements and ask questions about all of the operations of their city. Include in this procedural workshops as well as a basic financial overview of how funds flow within the city infrastructure.
3. Provide more budget details such that more in depth knowledge of operations and programs are gained by the budget documents. Provide technical briefing sessions for the public through either the internet or in person.
4. Provide a minimum increase of \$1 Million dollars to community investments. This can be made up from a reduction in the Regina Police Service budget of the same amount.
5. Develop a robust and engaging structure for both informing and gathering input and advice from taxpayers about going forward both from a budgetary basis but also from an operational basis such that this system can be utilized throughout the year on other issues needing input.
6. Place a physical limit to the growth of this city by implementing a bylaw to place a boundary around the city. Changes to the boundary would require a referendum put during elected official elections.
7. Begin a gradual phased in approach to returning the balance of Residential to Commercial tax 60/40 ratio.
8. Eliminate the sale of bottled water in civic facilities and encourage others to do the same.
9. Reduce the budget request of the Regina Police Service by \$1 Million and provide it to community organizations that are building social capital in our children and youth.
10. Automatically put all of the previous year's surplus into the revenue side of the upcoming budget.
11. Do not build the Destination Aquatic Facility at Wascana Pool. Spend the \$1.5 Million on the redesign of Maple Leaf Pool and the subsequent \$15 Million to replace the current Maple Leaf Pool. Subsequent to this, spend \$1.5 Million on the redesign of Wascana Pool and replace it once Maple Leaf Pool is finished.

12. Begin the phasing out of all cosmetic use of pesticides and herbicides on all city parks and school grounds.
13. Begin building north-south and east-west bike lane corridors for commuting cyclists. Build a bike lane link from the downtown to the Mosaic Stadium.
14. Eliminate the contract for paratransit services and plan to bring the services back in house as quickly as is feasible.
15. Do not include the widening of the Arcola/Bypass Bridge in the review of the traffic flow of Arcola Avenue.