

**PRESENTATION TO REGINA CITY COUNCIL
2019 CITY OF REGINA & REGINA POLICE SERVICE BUDGETS
MONDAY DECEMBER 10 2018
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Scrooge lives among us. He may even have had a hand in writing the City of Regina's 2019 budget—a budget, in my opinion, that reflects the meanness and injustice of the times that Charles Dickens so despised.

SWIMMING POOLS

Let me start with the budget proposal regarding swimming pools: that Maple Leaf Pool be permanently closed and Wascana Pool be rebuilt as a “new Outdoor Destination Aquatic Facility.”

Wascana Pool is located in Wascana Park and surrounded by affluent neighbourhoods. Maple Leaf Pool is located in the Heritage area, a low-income, inner-city neighbourhood. Is this why Maple Leaf Pool can be sacrificed?

According to the City website, Maple Leaf Pool is “beyond...repair.” When authorities wanted to close Connaught Library, they said its foundation was crumbling. As it turned out there was nothing wrong with it.

Even if Maple Leaf Pool is in bad shape, it can be repaired or replaced. Inner city facilities should not be eliminated. Period!

Some City Councillors say that Heritage children can walk to Wascana Pool. It would be a 5 K walk for some of those children. There is also talk about free bus passes for Heritage children to use to get to Wascana Pool. To get to Wascana Pool by bus, from Heritage, you would have to transfer downtown. How many children are likely to use the bus option even without a transfer?

Heritage children should not be discriminated against. They must keep a pool in their neighbourhood!

\$16.5 million has been designated for the design and construction of the “new outdoor Destination Aquatic Facility” in Wascana Park. In the name of a more generous and just sharing of the resources of our city, please spend this money instead on repairing or rebuilding Maple Leaf Pool and Wascana Pool.

ENDING HOMELESSNESS NOT IN THE BUDGET

Then there is Regina's homelessness crisis. 286 people were identified as homeless in Regina's 2018 homelessness count. That's 54 more people than in the 2015 count—a 23% increase.

In the 2016 municipal election, Mayor Fougere ran on a platform of ending homelessness. In 2017, Mayor Fougere brought a motion before City Council: *The Plan to End Homelessness in Regina*.

The Mayor's preferred solution to Regina's homelessness crisis is Housing First. Neither the 2017 nor the 2018 city budgets allocated any money to Housing First. The 2019 budget doesn't either.

Moreover, the *Plan to End Homelessness* has already cost taxpayers \$60,000—money spent not to house homeless people, but to hire consultants. The plan was supposed to be released in September. We're still waiting.

No one should be homeless in Regina—or anywhere. As Charles Dickens showed 175 years ago, the price homeless people pay for their homelessness is horrendous in terms of their health and well-being. Homelessness also costs taxpayers a huge amount—according to some estimates \$50,000 annually for each homeless person.

REGINA POLICE SERVICE A BUDGET PRIORITY

This same budget that proposes closing an inner city swimming pool and provides no money for ending homelessness allocates \$92.5 million to the Regina Police Service Operating Budget. That's 20% of the City budget and \$3.8 million more than in the 2018 budget. We keep handing the police ever increasing amounts of money and nothing changes.

Chief Bray often speaks about the social determinants of crime. One of them is a lack of recreational facilities for youth. Another is homelessness.

Near the beginning of *A Christmas Carol*, Scrooge receives a visit from a man soliciting funds to alleviate the suffering of the poor. "Many thousands are in want of common necessities" says the man to Scrooge.

"Are there no prisons?" asked Scrooge.

'Plenty of prisons,' said the gentleman."

A Christmas Carol tells the story of the transformation of Scrooge from a greedy, mean, and selfish man into someone engaged in the struggle to create a more just society.

As is usual with Dickens, the poor and homeless are represented mainly as children. Tiny Tim, the youngest child of Scrooge's clerk, Bob Cratchit, highlights the plight of those afflicted by the greed and meanness Scrooge exemplifies. Because his father is not paid a living wage, he is tiny and sickly.

But there are two other children in *A Christmas Carol*, a girl named Want and a boy named Ignorance. While both are dangerous, for Dickens, it is our ignorance of the suffering and injustice experienced by so many of our fellow citizens that is the more harmful as it allows that suffering and injustice to continue.