

**Central Zone Board Presentation to City Council Budget Meeting
December 9, 2019**

Mayor Fougere and City Councillors,

We are here tonight asking you to vote in favour of the recommended increase in financial supports for the City of Regina's local Community Associations.

This same time last year, we were here presenting to you on our impacts and struggles as Central Zone Community Associations. We did this to request a long overdue funding increase.

You may remember us describing the range of vital services and programming that we offer – such as clothing banks, cooking classes, community gardens, youth sports and recreation, community clean-ups, festivals, art classes, newsletters and community forums. We told you that our organizations serve some of Regina's most vulnerable and impoverished communities, that all of our services and programs are free or very low cost, and often meeting needs for basic life skills and necessities to which all Regina residents should have access.

You may remember us presenting data on the impact we have on our neighbourhoods and on the money that our work saves the City of Regina. We also brought detailed information on our current and past funding levels, and the ways we've been impacted by stagnant funding since 2007, which has amounted to funding declines since it did not keep pace with cost of living increases and fundamental purchasing or basket costs which have increased from year to year. Finally, we shared our struggles with rapidly increasing needs in our neighbourhoods, where issues such as poverty, homelessness, food insecurity, addictions and related social issues tend to be concentrated.

Over the past 3 months, our various staff and board members have engaged with the consultant and City staff to re-iterate and elaborate on the successes and challenges that we experience, and the supports we seek from the City. We are your eyes, ears and helping hands on the ground; we are your direct link to Regina neighbourhoods. Our role is fundamental in the wellbeing of those who comprise our city and our communities.

The resulting recommendations are more comprehensive than the simple funding increase we were asking for last year. They include regular networking and professional development opportunities for Community Associations (organized by the City), a joint insurance package that will help us save money on our own insurance, establishment of clearer roles and expectations, publicly recognizing our work, and other in-kind supports that respond to the needs and challenges we expressed.

We sincerely hope that this process will result in a closer, more communicative and interdependent relationship between Community Associations and the City of Regina. We have been assured that City staff are committed to talking further about developing an easier process for Community Associations to request funding increases, and ultimately to ensure we're not in this same position 12 years from now.

If this increase is approved, Phase 1 Community Associations will be eligible to receive an additional \$11,000 per year. Phase 2 will be eligible to receive an additional \$5000. With this money, we can afford to more fairly compensate our staff, hire out services such as bookkeeping and cleaning to free up staff time, and/or develop more programs and services to meet our ever-evolving communities' needs.

It's worth noting that, in real terms, when we account for inflation, a 20% increase today just brings us back up to 2007 funding levels.

There is a lot more that Community Associations can and should be doing. As crime rates, gangs and addictions increase, the City needs to be investing more in community programming and services that meet people's basic needs and help foster a stronger sense of belonging and community pride. Community Associations are well poised to do the work of creating safer, more equitable, and better connected neighbourhoods. We look forward to continuing these conversations with City staff, and with you, in the coming years.

Thank you.