

## 3 Basic points from Carl Cherland

READING the budget highlights as well as online information , a number of questions and thoughts came to mind.

1. Is this a budget that reflects our contribution to rebalancing our relationship with the living earth, the environment ... from which we fundamentally live and draw our life .. you know, air water food shelter!

Does this budget say our environment is important to us? Does this budget show our willingness to find our community's solutions to our contribution to the climate catastrophe?

Month after month, year after year, decade after decade we kick this can (our responsibility) away into the future. You may have heard yet again in a new UN report released the week of Nov 25/19 which paints a catastrophic picture if the world/Regina ( let's make it personal) does not drastically reduce greenhouse gas emissions GHG each year to limit global warming. Experts say GHG emissions need to drop 55% by 2030!! That is just 10 years away. The longer we put off making the hard decisions and changes in our habits of transportation, electric generation etc. the more extremely difficult the coming years are going to be for our city's residents. We are part of the world and our budget needs to reflect that. Does it?

Canada contributes 1.6% of that total GHG. Saskatchewan per capita GHG are the highest in Canada. Despite where we are, Canada is not on track to even meet its Paris Agreement target! Does this city budget truly lead us or is it just a status quo budget and a pre-election one at that (oh the inconvenient truths that when we see them we tend to quickly look away from reality.)

Does this budget seriously include a focus on us showing a change and rebalance. Our city is not just in debt in matters of finance and infrastructure but also in matters of sustainability. Should we be tired of stealing from the future well- being of our children, grandchildren? What does this budget do for them?  
DEBT

By the way, what is our current debt level? How much are we taxpayers paying annually in Interest on the debt, especially these last 20 years? Is this how we walk the talk of "We love Regina?"

This budget again shows a lack of inclusion of sustainability with the environment as a core. It should be a foundation upon which to build a budget. It should be a lens through which we look at every item in the budget.

What are other cities and communities doing to address their contribution to climate change? What can we learn from them?

Must we play upon our desires for the status quo and fears or should we be budgeting with our future balance with the environment in mind? Let's budget to become a green community and a blue community!! Los Angeles just became a blue community. While we are at it , what would it look like if Regina also used the UN Charter of Human Rights as a foundation upon which to build a budget? The solution will take everyone, at every level of gov't to address actively our need for sustainability.

The U.N. Secretary-General, António Guterres, decries the “utterly inadequate” efforts of governments (Regina) to curb planet-heating emissions and calls for a clear demonstration of increased ambition and commitment from leaders to tackle the crisis. Does this budget show an understanding of our impact on the environment and the consequences of simply perpetuating the status quo?

## 2. Public PARTICIPATION IN THE BUDGET PROCESS and formation.

I watched online the short and attractive you-tube presentation on the formation of the budget. It implies that there was public input. However, is it plausible to say that the budget is basically shaped and made in private non-public meetings? That includes the police budget. These private meetings are without the presence, participation, input and awareness of the taxpayers who are made to pay for the budget. At the very least that is very poor communication. It's like daddy doing all the deciding and spending and mommy working overtime to bring in the money ...which is never enough. Daddy always wants more for his interests!

A budget structured in secrecy with lack of strong participation in the decision-making by the very people who are paying is totally unacceptable. This budget process is far from the goal of participatory democracy ....

## 3. MONEY FOR COMMUNITY WELL-BEING IS MORE THAN JUST POLICE, CRIME WORK AND so called PUBLIC SAFETY.

A focus on Social Determinants has much in its favour. Why not have a community well-being budget? This would include a budget for the police but a police budget which is not shaped in secret from the tax payers and then presented as a take it or leave it budget. We are not funding a primarily self-focused, expensive and dangerous paramilitary organization that fundamentally walks to its own interests. We need a budget that includes thorough and serious civilian oversight. By civilian, I don't mean retired police officers who as civilians would again, tilt the budget toward an ever-escalating percentage of the city budget. I get it that the chiefs of police look after # 1 .... That's their members interests. Well where does it meet a boundary? What's the goal 25% of the city budget? 30?

The 2020 gross operating Police Budget of 96 million and its increase of 3.5 million is of “huge concern”. I would say it is grossly and unacceptably high. Are we trying to keep up with the police salaries from Vancouver, Toronto where the cost of living is much higher? What does it say when after about 2 years on the Regina Police force a person can make \$100,000? Is that personal income not higher than 80% of the adults living in Regina? Are the taxpayers themselves getting annual wage increases equivalent to what the police get annually? Hardly and on the contrary! Oh, and let's not forget the disgraceful Sask minimum wage being the lowest in the country. It is actually a sub-slave wage where not even a slave could exist making a living working 40 hours. Wealth inequity, poverty, mental health, lack of self-esteem, drugs, prostitution are all chief factors in crime and police work.

We have a crisis of underfunded social programs which is deeply connected to the increased crime rate. Including the social determinants in the community well-being budget could do wonders for the quality of life of all the residents in Regina including the crime rates.

More funds need to be provided to prevent the conditions that lead people to commit crimes. We need to invest sufficient funds to address the social determinants of many of these underlying issues. Funding programs that address the root causes of crime are grossly underfunded. Or is this deliberate strategic decision? Does the police budget need growth in crime to then warrant throwing more money at the police thinking, of course superficially, that it will address or superficially solve the problem. It won't. Evidence in other cities proves that. The money needs to come from the annual police's bloated budget. Poverty, joblessness, lack of hope, mental health, addictions all can link back to the self-esteem of meaningful work, hope, dignity of a place to live. It is not just the Regina police who can have that kind of work!

What about the \$600,000 which funds special duty assignments and equipment for the Grey Cup next year? Is that not more that we provide for many of our programs for the poor? How many millions of dollars will be brought into the businesses here during that whole event? Why are we citizens being made to subsidize this? Where is the business community that benefits from the sporting event but not helping to pay for it?

Including these considerations listed above for the city budget would in far healthier than the status quo.