

# DE19-165

Mayor Fougere and Council,

My name is Jim Elliott.

Tonight's budget draft has a number of significant problems and questions to be answered.

- 1) There has been a lot of statements around the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls for Justice, and rightfully so. And yet there is absolutely no mention of any actions taken by this administration besides giving limited funds to other groups. It has been identified numerous times, numerous years and by numerous people that projecting the status quo into the future will not deal with the injustice put on our Indigenous peoples by our society and our city. We have the justice system, including our Regina Police Service, which is repeatedly punishing our neighbours, our brothers and sisters, for OUR mistakes of the past. We continue to push our responsibility onto other governments or expect individuals to fill in the gaps. We continue to push more police officers on the streets thinking we will be increasing safety and well-being when we should be preventative and proactive rather than continue the current reactive actions(see Appendix 1). We continue to push actions on the social determinants of health onto others and not dealing with them as a city.
- 2) We see an increase in use of transit and recycling and yet the draft budget does not identify increases in estimated revenues. Recycling households have increased from 2013 to 2020. More homes are built. We are told year over year, ridership in transit in this city has been going up. Where is that extra revenue going? It is clearly not going into the transit budget.
- 3) Anyone would think there is a relationship between last year's budget number, projected actuals for 2019 and the 2020 projected budget number. And yet some go up, some go down, some go up even when projected actuals are lower than last year's budget.
- 4) We have in our vision of this city to be sustainable. Prior to the date that was proclaimed, we were not sustainable. Today we are not sustainable. And we are not working towards being sustainable in the future. If that is our vision or goal, then we have to be doing things today that will ensure sustainability in the future.
- 5) Our utility fees have been increasing 2-4% every year. The utility is intent to be a break-even proposal where revenue pays for expenses. That break-even point will not be reached in the future. We have too much infrastructure that will not survive into the future and we continue to build more infrastructure that will eventually need to be replaced in the future. We can expect that when children born today have children of their own, our utility rates will be twice they are now and we will still not be at that break-even point.
- 6) One measure of sustainability is to not be creating waste. We have a recycling fee that has no incentive to reduce waste. We have a garbage fee that has no incentive to reduce waste. We have a water utility fee that has no incentive to reduce waste. We continue to build and expand our landfill with no plans to close down the landfill. If you want to compost your household waste, you have to drive out to the landfill to deliver it there. Currently I take home recyclables because the Core Ritchie Neighbourhood Centre does not have a comprehensive recycling program.
- 7) The City's investment policy has not been reviewed since 2010. Given the changing market conditions, there is an opportunity to review the policy to ensure maximum returns, prudent practices, and the safeguarding of financial assets. With the increasing interest in divesting from

fossil fuel related investments coming from around the world, in Canada and from residents, this would be a good opportunity to look at some greener, cleaner and more socially directed local investment opportunities. Perhaps the Railyard Renewal Project and the redevelopment of the former Taylor Fields property through housing projects might be a reasonable civic venture to both redevelop those properties but also bring more intensification to the built parts of the city as proposed in the OCP<sup>1</sup>. These neighbourhoods could be modeled around carbon neutral energy, local economic development and complete communities. We could be modelling supporting local employment, food security and energy production for the rest of the city as we transition to a 100% renewable city by 2050.

- 8) It has been identified that the Sustainable Infrastructure<sup>2</sup> Department was formed as part of the management review to provide a more integrated, customer-focused and progressive asset management approach at the City. It supports decisions, plans and activities driven to achieve affordable and sustainable infrastructure. The department is responsible for development of asset management policies, processes and programs, long-range infrastructure planning and investment plans, geospatial strategy and governance, design and project delivery of integrated and major infrastructure projects, construction coordination, scheduling and field services. There is no mention of what Sustainable Infrastructure is and whether it is different than our current infrastructure under a new name.
- 9) The Citizen Experience, Innovation & Performance<sup>3</sup> division plans and supports organizational change that modernizes our traditional business lines and the services citizens rely on every day. Together we integrate people, strategy, process and technology to create an environment that sparks innovation, transforms services and changes our workplace culture. This sounds like we are Disney World and we are attempting to entice visitors to our fantasyland through neat rollercoasters and rides. Is this why Wascana Pool is being promoted as a tourist destination facility rather than a swimming pool? This sounds like marketing mumbo jumbo or jargon to increase tourism and an over indulgent consumer growth model that is neither sustainable nor within the ecological footprint for a city built in a limited resource base. Providing warm & fuzzy feelings do not provide the infrastructure for the provision of the social determinants of health. This will only continue the marginalization of citizens of this city.
- 10) This city has been proposing to build bike lanes and expand the bikeway network across this city for the past 25 years. We have had multiple plans put forward but as of yet, very little has been done in the past decade. Without designated routes and some level of on street protection, this city continues to hamper the expanded use of bicycles on the roads of Regina. The diversion of funds away from on street bike lanes is not helping the commuting cyclist. Multi-use pathways are recreational in nature and should not be part of the transportation master plan.
- 11) Arcola Avenue Corridor Study<sup>4</sup> - The identified items like the bridge widening over the Ring Road will only provide limited congestion relief and short term restrictions during construction. This will not relieve single occupancy automobile congestion on Arcola Avenue going to and from downtown Regina. Only dedicated express bus lanes with frequent service to downtown during extended rush hour will take the necessary congestion away from this commuter route.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.regina.ca/about-regina/official-community-plan/index.html>

<sup>2</sup> Page 62 of the Budget Document.

<sup>3</sup> Page 64 of the Budget Document.

<sup>4</sup> Page 87 of the Budget Document.

- 12) Utility Fund Budget<sup>5</sup> - Within the confines of the 2019 achievements, it is stated that the risk of a bypass from the wastewater stream to Wascana Creek was reduced not eliminated. It has also been identified that this problem is associated with cross flows from stormwater flows from large rainfalls. And yet, there does not seem to be any attempt to stop or eliminate the cross flows during large rainfalls, either capital or operational.
- 13) Counter Intuitive Goals – While there is an effort to reduce water demands through conservation and operational initiatives and because there is in most cases a primary way in which sewage is moved, that being gravity, there will be increased needs to force or flush the wastewater system because there is not enough flow in the system to move everything to the wastewater treatment plant. Similarly, the further and further development happens from the treatment plant, there is again going to be additional costs for those customers that are being put onto their bills to supplement others who are forcing them to pay for their service. There does not appear to be any line in the sand where the city will not build stormwater, water or wastewater systems and subsequently burden everyone for that cost. This implies an ever increasing cost to the utility and no measure or means of developing any sense of homeostasis in the cost of the utility.
- 14) 100% renewable by 2050 – We have made this a goal of this city in October 2018, over 15 months ago, with no action identified yet. We have six city buildings that could provide approximately 4 MW of solar energy every hour the sun shines. Based on an average of between 2256 and 4383 sunlight hours per year<sup>6</sup> and 7.5 cents per kilowatt hour<sup>7</sup>, the city could generate between \$650,000 and \$1,310,000 savings each year for the use of 6 city buildings for the next 25 years. Once built, it would be generating savings immediately. There are obviously more buildings and more people in this city that would be willing to move to becoming 100% renewable. And there are more ways to become carbon free.
- 15) And lastly, and most significant is the continued exclusion of any mention of the 2019 surplus in this budget document. With \$6.5 Million dollars being left from last year, there is no incentive from this administration to make that number known prior to being asked and having to admit that this money could be utilized by the administration to reduce our estimated increase in taxes or added one time projects.

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<sup>5</sup> Page 94 of the Budget Document.

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.regina.climatemps.com/sunlight.php>

<sup>7</sup> If this SaskPower policy was changed to be equal to the current rate, this revenue number would be double the stated savings.

## Appendix 1 - Asset Building

One recent example of this that worked on the premise that if our children are provided with the best supports and given the right encouragement and help, they would in time grow the community out of those problems of safety, risky behaviours and crime and would in time provide mentorship, models of strength and leadership in our community.

This is what is called Asset Building, developed by the Search Institute ([www.search-institute.org](http://www.search-institute.org)), initiated in the past by our YMCA through the Alliance of Asset Champions.

The research determined that each child has the potential for 40 Assets and that as the numbers in each child got more than half (20+), those risky behaviours and problems would begin to decrease, their school achievements would increase and they would do better overall. When assessed, we were like most communities in North America, having most of our children averaging around that 20 point.

With stronger children, they will be less prone to get engaged in drugs, gangs and crime.

With stronger children, they will become better students and employees.

With stronger children, they will become better parents and members of the community.

## Other Questions

1. Under the utility capital funding, there was a 2.4% increase in revenue plus a 3% increase in rates<sup>8</sup>, that in my mind, translates into only needing a 0.6% increase in revenue to cover off the costs identified and spent in the budget. Did that 2.4% increase in revenue go to reserves or did projects not get done?
2. Similarly within the city administration and the continuing increases in budget puts us into a significant dilemma, do we increase the budget to cover off the increasing costs of providing products and services or do we reduce the increase such that we push the deficit on to future generations or do we diminish the social capital in the city and the quality of life such that those that can pay get the services and those that are of reduced income go without and have a poorer quality of life?
3. Multi Material Stewardship Program<sup>9</sup> - these revenues should be coupled with the other revenues related to recycling and waste diversion. This should be also coupled with the compost collection space rentals from the landfill so as to allow for an appropriate relationship of revenues versus expenses and whether the residential recycling fee is appropriate and getting the desired outcomes.
4. Community Investments<sup>10</sup> - There is no reference to the preservation or investment into the natural heritage of this city or region. Natural heritage refers to the sum total of the elements of biodiversity, including flora and fauna, ecosystems and geological structures. Heritage is that which is inherited from past generations, maintained in the present, and bestowed to future generations.
5. Officers of the Council<sup>11</sup> - there was mention of the Committee Structure Review done in 2019. There was no release of the review or any recommendations that were implemented by Council in response to the review other than some discussion of software applications.
6. Office of the City Clerk<sup>12</sup> - there is mention of a 95.1% increase (\$1.2 Million) in the budget of the Office of the City Clerk with no indication as to what that increase is meant to be spent upon during 2020. One might assume this is related to the municipal election but no details are presented.
7. Land & Real Estate<sup>13</sup> - The projected budget will be going from \$78,000 in 2019 to ZERO in 2020. The Land & Real Estate department provides land development and real estate oversight for City-owned lands. The department also delivers real estate services including property management, sales and acquisition of City's land holdings. Is this department being disbanded and eliminated? Under the Assessment, Taxation & Utility Billing<sup>14</sup>, there is a budget of \$31,000 for City-owned Properties.
8. *Our Journey* roadmap<sup>15</sup> - this document was identified as a 2019 achievement and yet it hasn't and won't be released until 2020. It is hard to critique where you are going if you don't have the roadmap in hand and within

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<sup>8</sup> Page 3 of Budget document.

<sup>9</sup> Page 28 of the Budget Document.

<sup>10</sup> Page 37 of the Budget Document.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Page 46 of the Budget Document.

<sup>14</sup> Page 47 of the Budget Document.

<sup>15</sup> Page 70 of the Budget Document.

it the intended destination. Equally so, there did not seem to be any references to how it was created and whether a full community engagement model was used in the creation. From the text, it appears to be an internal document.

9. Reserve Balances<sup>16</sup> - it is identified that reserve balances are low in respect to our assets and that reserves are expected to increase \$7.5 Million. This can only be done in a few ways while operating the budget as a break even basis:
- a. Increase revenue through taxes or fee increases.
  - b. Increase external funding, maintain tax levels and move intended tax revenues into the reserves or limit use of reserves.
  - c. Decrease activity, maintain tax levels and move intended tax revenues into the reserves or limit use of reserves.
  - d. Save an additional \$7.5 Million in operating costs, maintain tax levels and move intended tax revenues into the reserves.

Which model of increasing the reserve balances will the City of Regina be using?

10. Outdoor Rink Board Improvements<sup>17</sup> - It is identified in the notes on this that the funds will renew one outdoor boarded rink site per year and yet there is no renewal in 2020 and the funds are not consistent from year to year. Secondly, at this rate, the current 20 year old boarded rinks will be 40 years old when replaced and then on forever, there will need to be at least one replaced each year if these boarded rinks are to be maintained and replaced regularly.
11. Golf Courses General Allocation<sup>18</sup> - there are identified four golf courses that would get these funds. There is no mention of the Craig Golf Course along Wascana Creek which apparently has been closed.
12. Advance Approved Capital Projects and Programs – 2020 Budget<sup>19</sup> - Besides the need for flexibility in cash management, there does not appear to be any rationale to getting prior approval for the Transit & Fleet Services portion of the proposal. In addition, many of those where there is no funding requirement needed in 2020, it would seem, could be approved for the 2021 to 2022 funding in 2020 and not now.
13. Counter Intuitive Goals – While there is an effort to reduce water demands through conservation and operational initiatives and because there is in most cases a primary way in which sewage is moved, that being gravity, there will be increased needs to force or flush the wastewater system because there is not enough flow in the system to move everything to the wastewater treatment plant. Similarly, the further and further development happens from the treatment plant, there is again going to be additional costs for those customers that are being put onto their bills to supplement others who are forcing them to pay for their service. There does not appear to be any line in the sand where the city will not build stormwater, water or wastewater systems and subsequently burden everyone for that cost. This implies an ever increasing cost to the utility and no measure or means of developing any sense of homeostasis in the cost of the utility.

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<sup>16</sup> Page 73 of the Budget Document.

<sup>17</sup> Page 83 of the Budget Document.

<sup>18</sup> Page 85 of the Budget Document.

<sup>19</sup> Page 91 of the Budget Document.