

Good Evening Council, Mayor Fougere. Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you regarding my thoughts on the 202 City of Regina Budget, and some ideas I have going forward, which also tie into the recently presented Community Safety and Well-being motion that was put forward by several members of council a few weeks back.

It is distressing to me, and many other citizens, that despite our increasing investment in policing year over year, the occurrence and severity of crime in our city continues to rise.

It is well researched and has been widely demonstrated that social intervention; namely, the investment in programs which aim to reduce disparity and address the social determinants health and crime, improve outcomes in many facets of society.

While I understand that the ownice to address these social issues, rests with all levels of government, I am confident that the changes we have the power to implement on a municipal level will have positive, measurable effects on our community and will propel Regina forwards, to serve as a leader in Community Health and Safety measures. We must also continue to press our provincial and federal levels of government to consider new, research-supported approaches to many of the "big issues" of our time that we are facing. It is time to start thinking differently.

I propose, that City Administrators, along with Mayor and Council adopt an intentional focus, not only on reactive measures of policing and justice, but on crime prevention, and harm reduction strategies as well. This would require commitment to conduct studies into what methods are the most effective to ensure policy going forward is based on evidence, as well as consultation with those in the community who are already involved in this work to see what gaps they identify in current social supports. This would also include a meaningful and CONSISTANT investment into social programming which mitigates the risk to precursors of crime, such as homelessness, addiction, poverty, mental health, and inequality. We already have many of the Community Based Organizations doing this meaningful work, however, they deal with constant resource constraint, and budget uncertainty and they NEED resources to put all of these strategies that we develop INTO ACTION.

The City can show their commitment to these initiatives by designating a percentage of the budget to SOCIAL Crime-Prevention Strategies year over year, as they would for Reactive Measures in the Regina Police Service budget. This investment will begin our transition to a different approach to Community Safety and over time, spending on our Policing and punitive justice will stabilize, and our city will become a safer, healthier place that is more desirable to live in. The longer we wait, the further behind we fall, and the more difficult (and expensive) the resolution will be.

I certainly do not aim to minimize the work the Regina Police Service does to improve the safety of our community, and I know that Chief of Police Evan Bray has expressed his support for adoption of a prevention-based approach to community safety. However, we must realize that dealing with these issues from the same angle (which is one of punitive, reactive justice) will yield the same results, at a higher cost each year, without any real advances on crime reduction. I realize that addressing the social determinants of crime is a tall order, and I will agree with Mayor Fougere that this is a massive undertaking. However, we must take steps TOWARDS the complex issues, rather than push them to the back burner because they are difficult. The way we are handling Crime in the city is NOT SUSTAINABLE, and if we do not act, we will pay for our inaction in both social and fiscal ways, as we have been for the last 25 years.

I support using a collaborative, systems approach not only in the realm of community safety, but also in regards to tackling some of the City's other major portfolios such as development of our City's Sustainability plan. The City must demonstrate dedication and leadership in these pivotal areas by developing EVIDENCE INFORMED POLICY and being bold enough to ACT, using the vast knowledge of our citizens and the power of collaboration to approach these issues; to create ACTIONABLE PLANS using methods that have proven to be successful in other municipalities. If we continue to defer these issues, we will never reach the destination that we all aim for, and will miss the opportunity to truly become the "most vibrant, inclusive, attractive, sustainable community, where people live in harmony and thrive in opportunity."

Thank you.

Casey Peart