

**BUILDING A SUSTAINABLE, INCLUSIVE AND JUST CITY**

In mid-March 2020, we began to respond to a pandemic of the COVID-19 virus. From the very beginning, our politicians have always been projecting that we want to get back to normal. Getting back to normal, in some people's minds, is the following:

1. People not having a home or enough food to feed their children
2. Colonialism continuing to oppress the Indigenous people of this country
3. People continue being shot, go missing or dying of an overdose
4. Billionaires continuing to gather more wealth
5. Climate change continuing to ravage this planet and its support services
6. The city's ecological footprint continuing to grow beyond its capacity to supply

This city should not be going back to normal, same old, same old. We have the ability to pivot and go in a new direction, to begin the resolution of inequity, racism and restoring this planet to where it needs to be to sustain life.

And it isn't like we don't know what best practices are needed as they are there right now, but not in a collective plan, like a budget. All that we need is the opportunity to change and the will to take that first step. In the way that we have been waiting for action on the plan to be 100% renewable by 2050, approved in October 2018<sup>1</sup>, this council has been either unwilling or insufficiently committed to do what is right for the people of this city or our part if we are to expand that to this province, this country or our place on this planet.

In the same way, that people had vision, a mission and a willingness to walk across this country in 1933 to be here in Regina<sup>2</sup> to develop the Regina Manifesto<sup>2</sup>, the time has come to begin that journey again and to call everyone deliberately to join in the development of a new plan for the coming hundred years.

Today, the sign posts are clear. We are going down a path that is increasingly darker, less egalitarian, less supportive and damaging where some would say is a path to the disintegration of the society as we know it. Some would say that this if not unchecked would purport to end the transcendent view of this species as one that has risen to the point in its evolution, that being the

Philosopher Joanna Macy writes of the oblivion we manufacture for ourselves to keep us from looking environmental problems straight in the eye. She quotes R. J. Clifton, a psychologist studying human response to catastrophes: "Suppression of our natural responses to disaster is part of the disease of our time. The refusal to acknowledge these responses causes a dangerous splitting. It divorces our mental calculations from our intuitive, emotional, and biological embeddedness in the matrix of life. That split allows us passively to acquiesce in the preparations for our own demise." Wall Kimmerer, Robin. *Braiding Sweetgrass – Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge and the Teachings of Plants*. Milkweed Editions. 2013. p. 326.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.regina.ca/about-regina/renewable-regina/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.policyalternatives.ca/publications/monitor/regina-manifesto-still-relevant.>

pinnacle of this civilization's endgame. There has been that desire, both spoken and not, that we have had for centuries, that being a peaceful, supportive and collaborative species. But what has been going on over the past few decades and some would say a few hundred years is the eventual demise of that dream or desire. That systemic destruction of our chance to achieve that goal has put us at the point where if we do not act to keep that dream and goal alive, we will not be in a position of getting there.

The knowledge and stories given by our Indigenous brothers and sisters have shown what has been done in the name of this country and our ancestors. This cannot continue. We need to heal, be healed and give ourselves the time to rightfully rebuild what was told to us in the treaties we signed long ago.

Climate Change has shown us that our basic ecological services that keep us alive are crumbling because of what we do. The economy upon which depends on those ecological services is showing cracks.

Democratic Decay has shown us that our basic understanding of an egalitarian, just and equitable society is no longer the end point for a growing number of politicians, millionaires and billionaires or corporate leaders.

The COVID-19 Pandemic has shown us that we did not nor have we the capacity to respond adequately to future pandemics and collisions of humanity and our civilization.

And we are not alone in this. Other peoples, other nations and city states have a similar view as to what is happening and likewise what needs to be done to change trajectories.

Just as the statements of Margaret Mead have stated before, "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has."<sup>3</sup>

Always remember that you are absolutely unique. Just like everyone else.

Never believe that a few caring people can't change the world. For, indeed, that's all who ever have.

I believe that this statement is equally applicable to this city, this group of individuals and organizations. We, indeed, can change the world if we want to do it.

So, what does that mean to this group of people gathered here today? Why am I addressing these 11 people? What can these 11 individuals, given the mandate to lead this city this past November, do amid the potential problems facing them and others today?

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.thoughtco.com/margaret-mead-quotes-3525400>

These individuals collectively have the capacity to change this city's trajectory. These individuals collectively have the hands to help others, to direct what needs to be done, to show what is possible and what can be done if we collectively put our hands, our minds and our hearts to the task at hand.

The transition away from our current direction takes only one step in a different direction. One degree of change means, as we have been told by our health officials in this pandemic, we can bend the curve. And as Martin Luther King Jr. said, "The arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice."<sup>4</sup> Our actions, in these times, must bend towards sustainability, inclusivity and justice.

So, as we want to have this city sustainable, inclusive and just, we must build upon the vision and principles that this implies and take that first step to bend the curve.

I have attached a list of problems and questions regarding the City of Regina Budget Book.

#### Donut Economy<sup>5</sup>

- End to Homelessness
- Free Transit & Paratransit
- Active Transportation, Walkability<sup>6</sup>, Bikeability<sup>7</sup>
- Zero Waste Strategy
- Limits to Sprawl
- Local Economic Trading Systems

#### 100% Renewable by 2050

- Solar Planning
- Energy Conservation
- Water Conservation
- Chemical Free Parks<sup>8</sup>
- Food Security

#### Social and Economic Well-being

- End to Racism

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.si.edu/spotlight/mlk?page=4&iframe=true>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.kateraworth.com/doughnut/>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.walkscore.com/walkable-neighborhoods.shtml>

<sup>7</sup> <https://cyclingincities.spph.ubc.ca/mapping-cycling-trips/>

<sup>8</sup> <https://hudson.quebec/en/services/urban-planning/environment/>

- Child Friendly Charter<sup>9</sup> and Developmental Asset Building<sup>10</sup>
- Reconciliation
- UNDRIP<sup>11</sup>
- Harm Reduction Strategy
- Just Transition Planning<sup>12</sup>
- Participatory Budgeting<sup>13</sup> and Deliberative Public Engagement<sup>14</sup>
- Neighbourhood Pod Strategy<sup>15</sup>
- Active use of the community wisdom, knowledge sharing

Respectfully submitted,

Jim Elliott,

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<sup>9</sup> <http://www.reginakids.ca/regina-childrens-initiative/about-us/regina-childrens-charter>

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.search-institute.org/our-research/development-assets/asset-building-tools-resources/>

<sup>11</sup> [https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/wp-content/uploads/sites/19/2018/11/UNDRIP\\_E\\_web.pdf](https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/wp-content/uploads/sites/19/2018/11/UNDRIP_E_web.pdf)

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.canada.ca/en/environment-climate-change/services/climate-change/task-force-just-transition.html>

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.policyalternatives.ca/publications/commentary/fast-facts-pb-potential>

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.involve.org.uk/sites/default/files/field/attachemnt/Deliberative-public-engagement-nine-principles.pdf>

<sup>15</sup> <https://shapemycity.com/> and <https://www.progresstoronto.ca/neighbourhood-pods-summary-mar-2020>

## **Appendix 1: What is in the Budget Book?**

With barely 2 ½ weeks to review the City of Regina Operations and Capital Spending Budget, here are some highlights of concerns.

### **Capital Spending**

#### **\$4.4 Million for the Railyard Renewal Project**

Response - If this would bring significant residential development in this area sooner, that would be a plus.

#### **\$10.7 Million in wastewater infrastructure renewal**

Response - If this removes the constant all year long sewer gas odours in the Al Ritchie area that would be a plus.

### **Operational Spending**

**No increase of funding to community associations, events and other local organizations** - An increase of \$1.2 million over the 2020 Budget. This increase is related to increases in funding provided to Regina Exhibition Association and Economic Development Regina to help these organizations continue operations through the COVID-19 pandemic.<sup>16</sup>

Response - With having to wait 14 years for the last increase in funding to community organizations, the wait begins again to receive another increase in funding. Expenses go up while revenue sources go down or stay the same.

**The grants from the provincial government for Transit and Paratransit are down \$630,000** - The budget for this revenue remains the same but is being backfilled by COVID-19 pandemic funds.<sup>17</sup>

Response - This may appear to be a net zero budget but when the pandemic funding does not come next year, that shortfall will have to be replaced. As to whether the revenue from usage will increase that substantially this year is highly questionable. This may show up in other budget revenue sources in 2022 that will need to be monitored or planned for when next year's budget forecast is done.

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<sup>16</sup> Page 23.

<sup>17</sup> Page 31.

## What's Lacking

**One reference to climate change** - Pressures due to aging infrastructure, population growth, climate change and changing regulations require the utility to plan and adapt to the changing conditions.<sup>18</sup>

Response – Without more reference to actions needed to reduce our carbon footprint or as some would say some early responses needed to bring our emissions down, it amounts to another year of doing nothing. Three years down, 29 years to go. If only as much effort was taken that is put into financial sustainability.

**There is a general interest from the City of Regina to end homelessness. The only action identified in the budget is the Housing Incentives Policy that provides \$2.53M for the Housing Initiatives Program<sup>19</sup>. But if you review the policy for the initiatives, they are limited to tax incentives for the housing development companies or the landlords of rental properties. So without a developer and/or a sympathetic landlord, the homelessness person isn't getting into a home.**

Response – Notwithstanding the lack of direct efforts to end homelessness, there are continuing to be empty homes unoccupied. The affordability of most rental properties has not been going down to allow for the homeless to get into rental units. We are seeing across the country a broad interest in providing small homes that can be built for less than \$100,000 each. This could be coupled with net zero energy initiatives. So doing the math, we could be putting at least 25 people in housing each year if we were to redirect the incentives program into a non-profit construction program like Habitat for Humanity. A new model might be needed as many of the non-profit organizations are into home ownership not temporary rental occupancy. As well conventional bungalow building is not what is needed. This isn't much but could help us curb the trend, especially after the pandemic.

**Use of Average Household Price versus Median Household Price and its related tax level** – Using the average household value as a way to express may not necessarily express whether those in lower valued homes are disproportionately paying more of the residential taxes than those in the larger higher priced homes.

Response – There needs to be a bell curve graph identifying the relative numbers of the various priced homes. The information below for 2003<sup>20</sup> shows that those homes less than \$125,000 paid 91.8% of the residential taxes while those in the \$125,000 to \$250,000 bracket only paid 8.2% of the taxes. So presenting it as the cost for a \$315,000 dollar home might be misrepresenting the reality for the majority of the homeowners.

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<sup>18</sup> Page 105.

<sup>19</sup> Page 42.

<sup>20</sup> Information provided by the City of Regina Finance Department in 2003.

	No. of Properties	Total Assessment	Average for Range	Mill Rate	Mill Rate Factor	Average Tax	Total Tax for Category	%	Cumulative Percentage
Commercial Portion	4099	\$ 9,796,305	N/A	0.01911	1.19	2389.93	\$ 43,697,684.02		
<\$25,000	7966	\$ 131,524,180	\$ 16,511	0.01911	0.8471	\$ 267.28	\$ 2,129,174.82	3.8	3.8
\$25000-\$49,999	15810	\$ 604,520,160	\$ 38,237	0.01911	0.8471	\$ 618.99	\$ 9,786,182.77	17.3	21.1
\$50,000-\$74,999	20210	\$1,236,058,380	\$ 61,161	0.01911	0.8471	\$ 990.08	\$ 20,009,605.78	35.4	56.5
\$75,000-\$99,999	8756	\$ 759,023,980	\$ 86,686	0.01911	0.8471	\$1,403.29	\$ 12,287,183.89	21.8	78.3
\$100,000-\$124,999	4268	\$ 470,253,030	\$ 110,181	0.01911	0.8471	\$1,783.63	\$ 7,612,525.53	13.5	91.8
\$125,000-\$149,999	1240	\$ 167,295,680	\$ 134,916	0.01911	0.8471	\$2,184.04	\$ 2,708,212.78	4.8	96.6
\$150,000-\$174,999	372	\$ 59,764,760	\$ 160,658	0.01911	0.8471	\$2,600.76	\$ 967,482.10	1.7	98.3
\$175,000-\$199,999	157	\$ 29,205,730	\$ 186,024	0.01911	0.8471	\$3,011.39	\$ 472,787.81	0.8	99.1
\$200,000-\$224,999	62	\$ 13,068,180	\$ 210,777	0.01911	0.8471	\$3,412.09	\$ 211,549.77	0.4	99.5
\$225,000-\$249,999	29	\$ 6,816,650	\$ 235,057	0.01911	0.8471	\$3,805.14	\$ 110,349.11	0.2	99.7
>\$250,000 Residential Portion	28	\$ 11,098,330	\$ 396,369	0.01911	0.8471	\$6,416.49	\$ 179,661.64	0.3	100.0
	58898					\$ 969.39	\$ 56,474,715.98	100.0	
Total Tax							\$ 100,172,400.00		

**Citizen Services Expenses are going down by \$1.237 Million dollars.** – Most of that is coming out of Roadways & Transportation (\$1.736M) and Transit & Fleet (\$0.778M). Fire & Protective Services goes up (\$0.425M) and so does Water, Waste & Environmental (\$0.785M). The Dive Recovery Team is moving to Fire & Protective Services rather than the police service.<sup>21</sup>

Response – It is hard to necessarily see with these decreases in Citizen Service Expenses that the services provided will not be significantly diminished such that it will take more time or effort to get the services expected. Will that mean fewer hours for

<sup>21</sup> Page 59.

access to the landfill? That clearly doesn't mean more transit & paratransit services. Roadway Operations<sup>22</sup> are described as construction and maintenance of city roads, sidewalks, easements and alleys.

**Sport Facilities and Recreation are going down by (\$0.198M) and (\$0.108M) respectively<sup>23</sup>** – Sport facilities provide funding to support recreational facilities such as athletic fields, ball diamonds and Mosaic Stadium. Recreation provides recreation opportunities for the community.

Response – Explain how this is not going to decrease access to quality recreation facilities or recreational opportunities?

**Development Services Infrastructure and Engineering (Development Approvals) is going to spend \$0.118M less this year<sup>24</sup>** – This service provides engineering services to implement community and neighborhood plans, providing infrastructure services for current and future residents.

Response – All the effort to implement community and neighbourhood plans and infrastructure services will have to be done with 4.79% less funding.

**With the inclusion of the Energy & Sustainability Framework funding of \$0.797M within the context of a net zero increase in budget, it necessitates that \$0.797M must be removed somewhere else in the budget<sup>25</sup>.** Which department or program is going to be eliminated, diminished or told to find a way to fulfill their mandate without the funds?

Response – Without transparency in the process of coming up with the net zero budget increase, what parameters were used to assess the need for funds and the related staff to complete the tasks and program services? Are we going to be told that everything will just take a little longer, waiting on the telephone for 45 minutes instead of 30 minutes? Or are there efforts to get non-profit organizations with lower paid staff to do the programming instead of city employees? Or is unstructured play going to be the norm rather than organized programming? Will the centres or pools be open one hour less per week?

**Planning and Sustainability Reserve is getting a larger deficit each year until 2025<sup>26</sup>** – It starts at a deficit of \$2.231M for 2020 and goes to a deficit of \$14.107M in 2025. This deficit is growing while we put \$6.233M into the Regina Revitalization Initiative Stadium Reserve.

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<sup>22</sup> Page 62.

<sup>23</sup> Page 69.

<sup>24</sup> Page 70.

<sup>25</sup> Page 78.

<sup>26</sup> Page 85.



Reserve Name	Projected Balance 2020	Additions	Reductions	Projected Ending Balance 2021	Projected Ending Balance 2022	Projected Ending Balance 2023	Projected Ending Balance 2024	Projected Ending Balance 2025
Planning & Sustainability Reserve	(2,331)	0	2,355	(4,686)	(7,041)	(9,397)	(11,752)	(14,107)

Response – It appears we might have our priorities or other levels of government are not helping to defer the costs of the pandemic on the City of Regina which hosts the provincial Saskatchewan Roughriders in Mosaic Stadium. It also seems to be consistent with the province’s lack of support for transit, paratransit and renewable energy development.

**Transit Fleet Replacement – There is money being spent on transit fleet replacement but there is no indications as to whether the city will be purchasing electric transit buses or replacing diesel with diesel.**<sup>27</sup> Twenty three million and 312 Thousand dollars are being spent on transit bus replacement over the next five years. Only \$0.275M is coming from other government funding programs. In a similar manner, the switching of the regular civic fleet to hybrid or electric vehicles would be useful as well.

Response – With the switch over to electric buses being a somewhat easy procedure as a number of Canadian municipalities have done it already and that these switch overs do take a couple of years to begin to tender and get those buses, it would be an easy step to identify at this time that the city will begin to purchase these buses to begin the transformation of the system from diesel to electric. It also would be an appropriate step also to begin to understand the ongoing costs of these new buses as compared to the diesel ones. The federal government is putting \$2.75B dollars in 2021, part of an eight year \$14.9B dollar investment in public transit. This goes just as well with the conversion of the regular civic fleet to hybrid or electric.

**On Street Bike Lanes and Multi-Use Pathways Program is receiving \$1.7M for funding of the design and construction of on-street bikeways and multi-use pathways in existing areas throughout Regina, it is hard to access what proportions are going to on-street bikeways and how much is going to multi-use pathways**<sup>28</sup>. Knowing that the design and construction of multi-use pathways are asphalt and are very expensive and where the placement of paint on the street and a few signs along the bikeway isn’t as costly, one can only estimate that there won’t be a lot of on-street bikeways built.

Response – Although this is promising, there needs to be more on-street bikeways put forward each year so as to begin to develop a valued network of streets that can be used to both get around the city and commute to work. There have been a

<sup>27</sup> Page 91 and 92.

<sup>28</sup> Page 95.

number of known roadways for decades that could accommodate bicycles easily. It is just a matter of putting them out there and beginning to educate cyclists and motorists to use them and be more aware of cyclists on the road respectively.

**The City of Regina Police Service Budget is going up 3.7% while the remainder of the City of Regina budget is going up by 0.0%. This amounts to a \$3.534Million dollar budget increase.**

**City of Regina Operating Budget vs. City of Regina Police Budget 2001-2021**

<b>Year</b>	<b>2001</b>	<b>2002</b>	<b>2003</b>	<b>2004</b>	<b>2005</b>
City	\$135,643,900	\$141,527,700	\$152,308,700	\$152,350,200	\$156,341,900
Police	\$37,391,700	\$38,523,500	\$41,058,700	\$43,190,700	\$45,328,700
Per Cent Increase		3.0	6.6	5.2	5.0
City/Police Ratio	3.63	3.67	3.71	3.53	3.45
	<b>2006</b>	<b>2007</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>2009</b>	<b>2010</b>
City	\$163,725,700	\$171,345,900	\$182,634,000	\$183,973,900	\$191,586,100
Police	\$47,858,700	\$49,503,400	\$52,822,900	\$55,717,300	\$59,434,300
Per Cent Increase	5.6	3.4	6.7	5.5	6.7
City/Police Ratio	3.42	3.46	3.46	3.30	3.22
	<b>2011</b>	<b>2012</b>	<b>2013</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>2015</b>
City	\$204,959,000	\$219,371,800	\$217,488,900	\$231,991,700	\$247,155,500
Police	\$62,572,200	\$64,564,700	\$69,205,500	\$73,046,900	\$76,920,200
Per Cent Increase	5.3	3.2	7.2	5.6	5.3
City/Police Ratio	3.28	3.40	3.14	3.18	3.21

	<b>2017</b>	<b>2018</b>	<b>2019</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>2021</b>
<b>2016</b>					
\$259,555,500	\$266,296,800	\$267,851,800	\$368,094,000	\$376,174,000	\$380,676,000
\$80,837,800	\$84,509,800	\$87,869,000	\$92,460,100	\$96,029,000	\$99,563,000
5.1	4.5	4.0	5.2	3.9	3.7
3.21	3.15	3.05	3.98	3.92	3.82
City of Regina Police Budget		5.03	Average Percentage Yearly Increase		
		3.43	Average Ratio		

In 2018, Regina's chief of police Evan Bray made \$241,281, plus another \$8,007 in additional compensation. Deputy police chief Dean Rae was paid \$239,366 in 2018, which includes \$12,023 in "other" compensation. For comparison, a provincial MLA gets \$100,068, a premier gets \$172,848. An MP gets \$182,600. A federal cabinet minister gets \$269,800.

Police per 100,000 people, by province (2018)

P.E.I.	141
N.B.	160
N.L.	171
Alta.	174
Ont.	177
<b>Average</b>	<b>182</b>
B.C.	185
<b>Sask.</b>	<b>186</b>
Que.	189
Man.	189
N.S.	194
Y.T.	326
Nvt.	354
N.W.T.	416

Response – There is no information present in the budget documents or from overall operations that the addition of 11 officers or a \$3.534M dollar increase in the budget will do anything but increase the budget again. The head of the Regina Police Commission has indicated publicly that a national average should be the reference point as to where the Regina Police Service should be and that this police service is behind. The average for Saskatchewan is above the national average for Canada in 2018 and above at least six other provinces.

With the increased funding of an average of 5.03% increase each year for the past twenty years, as stated before, there is no rationale for getting an increased budget. This will not provide the alleged additional safety factor to justify this budget at this time. This police service is developing a paramilitary army thinking that this will deal with crime.

It has already been noted by the police service that the determinants of health are the reason for much of the crime and the funds need to be going to those services and not the police service. If there wasn't a homelessness problem, the police would not be dealing with that problem. If a harm reduction strategy was implemented to deal with addictions and mental health, the police would not be dealing with health checks and drug problems. The police service has been used as a dumping ground for all of the bad problems while governments have been able to slash budgets and wipe their hands of the problems.