

10. Environment

Winnipeggers have identified a healthy environment as “essential to Winnipeg’s long-term wellbeing (Winnipeg: 2010, p. 65). With proper budgeting and planning priorities, cities can drive sustainable development, allowing citizens to conserve resources and build for future generations. Lack of planning, such as we have seen in Winnipeg, can lead to wasted resources, automobile-dependant infrastructure, increased greenhouse gases and polluted waterways.

A sustainable Winnipeg needs to adopt principles of ecological budgeting. Ecological budgeting promotes high quality of life over the long-term while minimizing impacts for future generations.

Ecological budgeting presupposes that governments will use taxation and revenue to support sustainable living. This involves removing perverse subsidies for less sustainable alternatives like sprawl and fossil fuel consumption, while investing in more sustainable alternatives.

Governments should take a full-cost accounting perspective to assess costs and benefits of actions. This means looking both upstream and downstream to the long term-impacts on communities and the environment of the actions we take today. It also requires that we consider the impacts of our consumption on those around us. However, sustainable development also must have a social component. We must ensure that basic welfare and human development needs are provided for all citizens, both across generations, and equally, within the current generation. For this reason the Alternative Budget also adopted a gender lens which, when used in conjunction with ecological budgeting, brings the needs and concerns of some of Winnipeg’s more marginalized citizens to the forefront.

These principles have implications across both the operating budget and the capital budget. As well, they will affect how revenue is generated, and it is for this reason that the environmental working group recommended that the City re-

quest the Province to allow it to impose a gas tax within city limits

Gas Tax

In past years, the city has decidedly not taken a full-cost accounting approach, particularly in regard to its road budget. The 2014 Preliminary Capital Budget proposes \$84.2 million for local and regional street repair. This is a \$53.3 million dollar (173 per cent) increase over 2012. Moreover, a further \$617 million is proposed over 2014–2019 for new major capital projects for roads and bridges. Although some of this is paid from over \$40 million in federal gas taxes, most of this expense is funded by general tax revenue.

Residents are paying for the unsustainable expansion of Winnipeg’s highway network whether or not they are contributing significantly to its wear and tear. This leaves a gaping hole in the City Budget, meaning that other important infrastructure priorities are left unfunded. We recommend that Winnipeg request the Province for authority to tax gasoline sold within Winnipeg. If approved, this would provide approximately \$22 million in revenue for the City (Green Action Centre, 2012).

We acknowledge the challenge in getting the Province to cooperate on this issue, especially since it seems so willing to help finance new road construction. Given the difficulty, we have not included this potential revenue source in the AMB. Nonetheless, the AMB continues to highlight the need to shift our spending priorities from infrastructure that serves the car to the development of a better public transportation system. Accordingly, it urges policy makers in both levels of government to consider the logic in levying this new tax.

Active Transportation

Walkability and cycling infrastructure are key indicators for a vital and healthy city. North American cities that have made key investments

in active transportation are perennially listed as among the most liveable. However, Winnipeg's transportation system remains car-dominated, with 70 per cent of traffic being driver vehicles.

In 2009, in response to the availability of federal and provincial economic stimulus funding for infrastructure, Winnipeg made a record \$20 million investment in active transportation infrastructure. However since then, investment has dropped off.

In 2013, the City of Winnipeg spent \$1.25 million on active transportation infrastructure, including \$0.5 million on recreational bike paths and walkways and \$0.5 million on active transportation corridors. Budget 2014 foresees only a modest increase to \$1.5 million. At this rate Winnipeg will make only halting progress in completing its active transportation infrastructure network. After a jump of over 150 kilometres of active transportation facilities in 2010 from (212 km to 376 km) the following year, our network grew only 6 km to 382 km.

We recommend a robust investment in active transportation infrastructure, increasing to \$6 million per year. This would allow the city to make progress in completing our active transportation network. Gaps in the network, especially around underpasses, or through industrial areas, make it challenging for cyclists to access many parts of the city, and limit their ability to make cycling an everyday option for commuting, shopping and recreation.

Key priorities for the active transportation network include: the Pembina Underpass, the Osborne Underpass, connecting the Disraeli AT Bridge with the Northwest Greenway, and the completion of a new bikeway along Kingsbury Avenue connecting Scotia Street with McPhillips.

A further priority for cycling infrastructure is to ensure that the second phase of the Rapid Transit Corridor includes active transportation connections. By providing quality cycling routes, the expected catchment area of stations can be increased nine times, greatly increasing the use

of the system. Phase two Rapid Transit should be a model for the expansion for the rest of the city.

New Capital Expenditure:

- Active Transportation Infrastructure: \$4.5M

Active Transportation Planning

Beyond infrastructure investments, service improvements are also required. If the City is serious about its commitment to building Complete Communities, it must substantially increase funding for human resources to oversee the implementation of its bicycle and pedestrian strategies as well as increase consultations with communities. Without planning resources, it is likely the city will miss important opportunities to improve infrastructure, while wasting resources on lower priority connections. The Alternative Budget recommends increasing staff in the AT planning department from one position to three full time equivalents, at an increased cost of \$150,000. These monies will be transferred from the cancellation of the William Clement Parkway extension.

New Expenditures:

- Active Transportation Planning: \$150,000
- From funds re: cancellation of William Clement Parkway Extension: (\$150,000)

Waste Reduction

Source Separated Organics (sso) Pilot Program

Winnipeg has among the lowest rates of recycling and waste diversion of any major city in Canada. In recent years, the volume of garbage per person has gone down from 342 kg in 2009 to 303 kg in 2011. Only 24 per cent of solid waste is diverted from landfills, the lowest level among comparable cities in Canada (City of Winnipeg, Preliminary Budget 2014).

The major reason for Winnipeg's poor waste diversion record is lack of action on organic waste. Many major Canadian cities now have household compost collection. Compostable organic waste can account for as much as 40 per cent of household waste (Statistics Canada, 2005). By putting it into the landfill rather than our yards or gardens, we waste a valuable soil amendment. As well, as organic waste decomposes in the landfill, it produces methane, a major contributor to global warming. Even with gas collection at Brady Landfill, which started in 2013, organic waste will continue to emit methane from the site for decades to come.

The Alternative Budget proposes the introduction of a pilot program for weekly organic collection in 2014. This proposal follows Winnipeg's 2010 Comprehensive Integrated Waste Management Plan. Models exist in many other cities across Canada, including Ottawa, Vancouver, and Hamilton.

The cost for the compost collection program would be offset by a reduced pick up schedule for garbage. In other cities, once organic collection goes into effect, pick up can be reduced to every two weeks. Volume is significantly less, and the smell from garbage that is left over after organic removal is greatly reduced. Initially however, there will be a cost for the SSO program of \$400,000 per year (Winnipeg 2011).

New Expenditure:

- SSO pilot project: \$400,000

City Centre Resource Recovery Centre

One of the centrepieces of Winnipeg's waste reduction strategy is the development of Community Resource Recovery Centres (CRRC). These local community facilities will allow citizens to conveniently dispose of a variety of recyclable goods and materials. They will increase the ability of the city to recycle bulky goods, construction waste, furniture and other commodities. The City has planned four Resource Recovery Centres, with sites planned in the North, East West Ends of the City, as well as a Centre at Brady Landfill.

We recommend a CRRC be located in a central neighbourhood also. Inner City neighbourhoods should have access to the same recycling amenities as other neighbourhoods in the city. The inclusion of a Central Community Waste Recovery Facility would recognize that many Inner City residents do not have regular access to a vehicle and are often unable to transport their recyclable waste to a suburban facility.

As well as improving recycling access for Inner City residents, the Central CRRC would help improve the sanitation problems seen in some area alleys. Inner City neighbourhoods have often been dumping grounds for construction waste and other bulky goods. The Central CRRC could also provide local employment opportunities for Inner City residents.

Total Expenditure:

- Resource Recovery Centre: \$1M

North End Waste Water Treatment Plant

The City of Winnipeg has delayed for too long the construction of a new waste water treatment plant for Winnipeg's North End. The nearly 80 year old facility is one of the worst polluters of phosphorous in the country, and is also a significant polluter of ammonia and nitrogen according to the 2010 National Pollutant Release Inventory. (Skerritt, 2011) In 2002, a malfunction at the plant sent 427 million litres of raw sewage into the Red River (Clean Environment Commission, 2003). As a result, the Province passed legislation requiring the City to complete a plan to upgrade the plant by the end of 2014. Because of delays, it is now unlikely the plant can be finished before 2019.

The time has long passed for the political manoeuvring to cease and construction to begin. The City's proposed 2014 Capital budget allocates \$10 million to the plant upgrade, with a further \$500 million over the next 5 years. However, budgets for future years are not always secure funding commitments. As recently as the 2013 Budget, the City had promised to spend \$40 million in 2014 and \$130 million in 2015. Given the City's

record of changing plans, and to hold the City to account on this priority, we maintain it in our Alternative Budget for 2014.

New Capital Expenditures:

- New End Waste Water Treatment Plant capital spending: \$100M
- Active Transportation Infrastructure: \$4.65M

Total Operating Expenditures

- Active Transportation Planning: \$150,000

- Cancel William Clement Parkway extension (\$800,000: \$150,000 to AT): (\$150,000)
- Source Separated Organic: \$400,000
- City Centre Resource Recovery Centre: \$1M
- Debt servicing charge for AT capital expenditure: \$300,000
- Debt servicing charge for Waste Water capital expenditure: \$7.2M

Total: \$8.9M