

Municipal Relations

A: Infrastructure

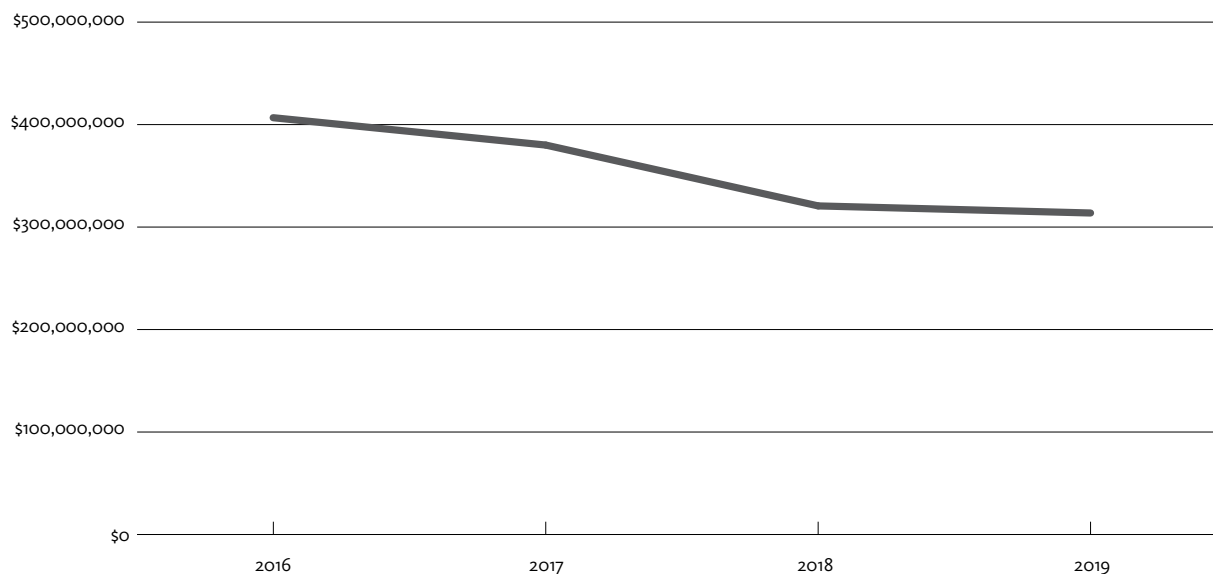
It's no secret that the relationship between Manitoba's provincial government and the City of Winnipeg has hit a low point. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the souring of municipal-provincial relations is the result of budgetary difficulties, largely arising from disputes over cost-sharing agreements between Winnipeg and the provincial government. What began as financial issues quickly devolved into open conflict between the two levels of government. This deteriorating relationship, however, is not exclusive to Winnipeg. Other cities throughout the province have felt the impacts of provincial cuts and have found that their concerns are going left unheard in the provincial government. In 2018, Thompson Mayor Dennis Fenske said that "the north is truly hurting" and that he was unable to secure a meeting with the premier to discuss Thompson's economic woes, and Mayor of Winnipeg Brian Bowman echoed similar concerns that the inaccessibility of the provincial government was hampering the city's relationship with the province.^{1,2} The present situation need not be this dismal. Restoring the relationship between Manitoba and its municipalities requires the provincial government to restore the funding agreements that towns and cities across

the province rely on, to give municipalities stable transfer payments from various revenue streams and to leverage federal funding, while also providing municipalities with new revenue sources so as to increase their financial health and autonomy.

How Did We Get Here?

Relations between the province and the City of Winnipeg began to decline in 2017 when the province froze its funding for Winnipeg Transit at 2016 levels. Prior to the freeze, the city and the province had a cost-sharing agreement that saw all operating costs not covered by fares split evenly between the municipal and provincial governments. The freeze effectively ended this 50/50 agreement, thus making the city wholly responsible for the inflationary and operating cost increases of Winnipeg Transit. The relationship truly took a turn for the worse in early 2019, when the city decided to delay the release of its annual budget because the province had yet to confirm its funding levels for the city.³ The conflict intensified when the city claimed that the province would not release \$82 million of infrastructure funding for projects from the previous year, while also seeking to redirect \$34 million for upgrading the North End Water

FIGURE 1 Financial Assistance to Municipalities, 2016–2019, in 2019 dollars



SOURCE: Compiled from data from Province of Manitoba Budgets: 2016; 2017; 2018; 2019⁷

Pollution Control Centre to other infrastructure projects. These redirected funds account for a minuscule portion of the total \$1.8 billion required for the project. Both sides accused the other of being misleading and placed the blame for the funding shortfall squarely on each other.⁴

In response to the city’s financial concerns, the premier released a statement saying that Winnipeg has the “most generous funding agreement enjoyed by any city in Canada” and that he trusts Manitobans can “separate fact from fiction”.⁵ Analysis conducted by the CBC goes great lengths to separate fact from fiction and demonstrates that this funding has in fact “been in decline or levelled off” in Winnipeg and that it is not the most generously funded city in Canada.⁶ Moreover, financial assistance to municipalities across the province from Manitoba Municipal Relations has been steadily dwindling since 2016. This funding provides vital assistance for municipalities’ operating and capital budgets, and when adjusted for inflation, has decreased by 24.11 percent since 2016 as the graph below demonstrates. Cities across the province rely on this type of funding

for major capital projects, such as rapid transit and bridge construction, as well as crucial day-to-day services like policing and water systems.

To further add fuel to the fire, the province has declined to provide Winnipeg with \$40 million in road funding as part of a five-year, \$250 million road renewal program initiated by the previous provincial government in 2014.⁸ The program saw \$50 million released to the city annually for road renewal, but only \$10 million made it to the city’s coffers in the final year of the program. In a letter to Mayor Bowman, Municipal Relations Minister Jeff Wharton wrote that “bus rapid transit — a \$92-million-dollar payment — is now counted by the province as roads funding”.⁹ The fallout of this funding gap is enormous, as the city was forced to reduce its residential roads budget from \$60 million to \$21 million, thus making the city unable to pay for any residential road repairs in the upcoming year.¹⁰

Similar uncertainties have had negative consequences in municipalities across the province. In 2018, the provincial government cut funding for the Municipal Road and Bridge Program

from \$14 million to \$2.25 million. This program helps municipalities build vital infrastructure they might otherwise be unable to afford, leading the mayor of Thompson to note that “roads carry the lifeblood of municipalities across Manitoba, and as a northern hub for transportation and heavy industry, Thompson’s businesses depend on them to thrive”.¹¹ This funding was so crucial to small towns across Manitoba that “a total of 102 Manitoba municipalities — a record number — have co-sponsored a resolution calling on the province to fully reinstate the program’s former funding levels”.¹² The collective action of the Association of Manitoba Municipalities successfully secured the restoration of equivalent funding levels for the Municipal Road and Bridge Program in 2019. Although the funding was ultimately restored, the initial shortfall caused both significant stress and uncertainty for the municipalities that rely on such funding to afford much-needed infrastructure.

Despite numerous budgetary issues, the province has not taken the federal government up on its various funding offers to help pay for vital infrastructure in cities across the province. Winnipeg South MP Terry Duguid noted that “the federal government is making a record amount of funding available for environmental infrastructure, but neither city hall nor the province has applied for any of it to offset the costs associated with billion-dollar sewer upgrades”.¹³ Duguid is referring to the \$1.4 billion upgrades to the North End sewage treatment plant mandated by the province in 2003 to reduce phosphorous pollution, which has enormously detrimental effects on the health of Lake Winnipeg. Despite being an issue of significant provincial importance, the provincial government has refused to help the city cover the costs of the project.¹⁴ Federal funding could be leveraged by the province to assist the city in upgrading the treatment plant while increasing infrastructure funding for the city simultaneously. Similarly, the province refused to distribute \$5 million from the federal government generated by the carbon tax

for environmental projects at schools across the province.¹⁵ Although the money will instead be transferred to municipalities, universities, and schools by the federal government, the province’s reluctance to accept funding raises questions about its commitment to the growth and development of Manitoba’s municipalities. The budgeting uncertainties caused by program cuts and the refusal of federal support place undue financial stress not only on Winnipeg, but on small towns across the province. Resolving these uncertainties requires the province to restore funding levels, to provide municipalities with more stable funding sources, and to give municipalities additional powers to generate own-source revenue.

The Policy Options

Manitoba’s municipalities are the foundation of the provincial economy. Winnipeg alone accounts for nearly two-thirds of the province’s population, while the city makes up 70 percent of the provincial gross domestic product.^{16 17} As such, getting the province’s finances in order does not involve stifling public expenditures in Manitoba’s cities — it requires investing in them. An environmentally conscious, fiscally equitable, and inclusive economy requires a provincial budget that recognizes and affirms the economic importance of Manitoba’s municipalities. In order to rebuild the relationship between the province and its municipalities, a provincial budget must:

- 1) Begin by restoring funding agreements**, such as the transit cost-sharing agreement and the five-year road renewal program. These agreements constitute a significant part of municipal operating budgets, and any uncertainty with this funding makes it extraordinarily difficult for municipalities to plan for their future. This is true of both small and large municipalities, which all require infrastructure to grow and develop. Winnipeg has been hit especially hard by these cuts, considering the city was forced to hike transit fares and delay

necessary road repairs for the foreseeable future. Reducing funding for transit disproportionately impacts low-income individuals, while simultaneously hampering the city's climate change mitigation efforts based on shifting transportation usage towards public transit. The negative impact of transit service cuts is especially true for Thompson, where municipal bus service has been sporadic since October 2018 when Greyhound ceased operating in Western Canada¹⁸. Additional provincial assistance must be provided to the northern hub to ensure that residents have equitable access to public transit in the wake of Greyhound's exit from the market. Achieving progressive policy outcomes requires close financial cooperation between the provincial and municipal governments, and this cooperation requires the restoration of funding and cost-sharing agreements.

Accordingly, as explained in the Steps Toward a Green Deal (Conservation and Climate Change chapter) in this APB, we restore the province's operating grant to Winnipeg Transit, invest in a Frequent Service Transit Network, in Active Transportation infrastructure and in an inter-community transportation network to compensate for the loss of the Greyhound bus service.

Increased Expenditure as Costed in Conservation and Climate Change section:

Restore Winnipeg Transit 50/50 operating grant: \$8.3

Grant to City of Winnipeg re

Frequent Service Transit Network,

Support for the low-income bus-pass,

Support for the completion of the Eastern rapid transit corridor: \$25M

Grant to City of Winnipeg for

Active Transportation: \$3.1M

Grant to other municipalities for

Inter-community transportation: \$5M

Total Infrastructure Support Grants: \$41.4M

2) Provide municipalities with stable transfer payments from a variety of provincial revenue

streams and leverage federal funding support.

An ideal place to start would be for the province to provide municipalities with a portion of the federal cannabis excise. Of this excise, 75 per cent is transferred to the provinces from the federal government, "with the expectation that the provinces will then hand over 25 per cent of the total to municipalities" to help cities cover the costs associated with legalization, such as policing and zoning changes.¹⁹ Manitoba has levied an additional 6 per cent on cannabis sales, but the provincial government has not confirmed whether it would share this revenue, or the federal excise revenue, with municipalities. Moreover, once the province develops a sufficient carbon pricing system, as the APB has, rather than having the federal government impose its own on the province, a portion of provincial carbon pricing revenue should be transferred to municipalities to assist them with their efforts at curbing climate change (see APB section on Climate Change, and Policy Paper A). For example, the City of Winnipeg would be able to use provincial carbon pricing revenue to shift its fleet entirely towards electric buses, alongside other climate resiliency policies the city aims to implement. As explained in the Green New Deal chapter, this APB provides the City of Winnipeg with a \$7M interest-free loan to invest in electric buses.

Additionally, the province should leverage available federal funding to support municipal budgetary needs. This would both improve the fiscal health of Manitoba's municipalities while simultaneously saving the province money — both of which are major goals of the current provincial government.

3) Equip municipalities with additional own-source revenue generation mechanisms.

One of the biggest challenges facing towns and cities across Canada is their reliance on both the property tax and provincial grants for their operations and service provision. While the property tax is generally a stable revenue source, it does not serve the social policy function of a tax in that it does

not alter behaviour or counteract negative economic externalities, nor does it grow perfectly in proportion with the economy. The province's rationale in reducing funding for municipalities appears to be that the provincial government believes them to have a "spending problem," as Finance Minister Scott Fielding said in an interview this year.²⁰ One way to increase the municipalities' financial health is to provide them with a mix of additional own-source revenue streams. For example, a commuter fee would allow municipalities to charge those who commute from outside the city for work and therefore do not contribute to the property tax base. Moreover, a sales tax of one percent (equivalent to the amount recently repealed by the provincial government) would better connect municipal tax revenue to economic activity, thus generating more revenue as the economy grows.²¹ In 2003, Kitchen & Slack argued that Winnipeg would receive \$93 million annually if the province allocated one percent of an eight percent provincial sales tax to the city.²² While the province may be unlikely to transfer one percent of its provincial sales tax to Winnipeg, allowing the city to collect one percent in addition to the existing provincial sales tax rate instead would substantially improve Winnipeg's financial situation without reducing provincial tax revenue.

Conclusion

If the provincial government wants Manitoba's municipalities to get their fiscal books in order, it needs to give them the tools to do so. Starting with restoring the funding programs that are so vital to municipal operations, the province should also begin to share revenue from sources in which municipalities have a direct policy interest, such as carbon pricing and the cannabis excise. As cities deal with the costs of climate change, legalization, and other pressing issues, they need policy mechanisms that both generate revenue and serve a positive public policy goal. Ultimately, as the province wants Manitoba's municipalities to be-

come more self-reliant, it must provide them with the means to do so. The ability to generate its own stable revenue that has positive policy outcomes and that simultaneously grows with the economy is the key characteristic of a financially healthy and responsible municipality. If the province wants to improve its own financial situation, it must recognize that this process begins with Manitoba's economic foundation: its municipalities.

The APB dedicates \$5M for a study on how the province can generate more revenue to fight climate change, including helping municipalities generate their own-source revenue as discussed above. This expenditure will be allocated in 2020 for the above recommendations and the research, planning, consultation, and initiation of structural changes highlighted in Budget Paper A.

Increased Operating Expenditure: \$5M

Total Increased Operating Expenditure as Costed in Green New Deal Chapter:

Infrastructure Support Grants: \$41.4M

Municipal Own-source Revenue Study: \$5M

Total: \$46.4M

B: Community Development

Role of Community Development Sector

In Manitoba, community development has been largely conducted by community-based organizations (CBOs) who have led important work to address complex community challenges, to strengthen our province's communities, and to revitalize local economies that benefit everyone. Development has been most effective and sustainable when it is community-led.

Many CBOs support people in inner city, urban, rural, and Northern communities who are marginalized by economic, social, and environmental issues that are a "manifestation of government policy". Often, CBOs end up being the only resource left for many who are most acutely impacted by this exclusion.²³

These organizations do much more than provide band aid solutions or charity. CBOs are working on alternative development models built on local prosperity, community economic development, local ownership, and healthy communities.

For example, a collective impact evaluation of Neighbourhood Renewal Corporations (NRCs) found that “Manitoba has one of the most unique and promising models for community development in North America. Under the Neighbourhoods Alive! strategy, Manitoba developed a long-term community-led development model that empowers communities to take the lead in making their own communities the best place to live through the established [NRC] in their designated area”.²⁴

CBOs in Manitoba “are interested in knowing and understanding the outcomes of their programs but would like to include a broader analysis that doesn’t focus so narrowly on cost-efficiency.”²⁵ Community development, led and supported by CBOs, has the long-term power to create stronger communities across Manitoba and change systems for the better. The Manitoba government plays an important role in supporting community-led development in all communities, including those facing multiple economic and social barriers.

Role of Community Development Sector in Manitoba’s Economy

CBOs are also an important part of our economy with a high return on investment, both economically and socially. Imagine Canada, a voice for charities and non-profits across the country, argues that “even though it is mission-driven and provides many services for free or at non-market prices, the charitable and nonprofit sector is an integral and important part of Canada’s evolving economy.”²⁶

The share of the gross domestic product of Manitoba’s charitable non-profit organizations is higher than the national average, hovering around

5% in 2017.²⁷ NRCs have helped create 1226 jobs through direct employment, pre-employment volunteer opportunities, training, social enterprise development and local procurement practice.²⁸ Further, nearly \$9,000,000 has been invested in housing and nearly \$31,000,000 has been leveraged in affordable housing via NRC programs.²⁹ CBOs across Manitoba have led important local economic development work in urban, rural, and Northern communities.

Challenges Facing the Community Development Sector

CBOs in Manitoba are impacted by macro and local challenges to their community development work.

Growth in the economy that “is not equitable, inclusive and environmentally responsible increases the demand for the social and environmental services the charitable sector provides.”³⁰ Income inequality, an aging population, changing volunteer and giving patterns, growing transitional needs of newcomers and refugees, and the impacts of climate change are also contributing to an increased demand.³¹ With these forces in mind, Imagine Canada discusses “an inability of charities to meet the social, cultural and environmental needs of Canadians and as a slow but perceptible erosion of Canadians’ quality of life.”³²

As Local CBOs work to address these macro issues, they are experiencing greater precarity in funding. A 2018 Winnipeg Foundation report found that “while the commitment and passion is strong, the charitable sector as a whole is currently stressed and stretched,” in part stemming from “uncertain funding arrangements [that] make planning difficult and have a negative impact on organizational effectiveness.”³³

The 2017 State of the Inner City illustrates this issue, finding that “... many of the marginalized populations that [CBOs] work with have a low level of trust for governmental agencies

... Community-based agencies, however ... are able to develop a sense of trust with those who need their services. They also noted however that this trust can be quickly eroded when staff turnover occurs and/or programming is cut due to lack of funds.”³⁴

Non-profits are also affected by a trend toward greater precarious employment, particularly for young people and other marginalized workers who have found employment within the sector.³⁵

Current Situation and What’s Needed to Address Challenges

Community development funding for CBOs is housed in the Department of Municipal Relations. Historically, Manitoba has had numerous community development funding streams and programs, generally targeted at different regional, geographic, or population groups.

In Spring 2019, the Manitoba government embarked on a process to develop a new strategy for the non-profit community development sector, meant to “build capacity and promote sustainability” and “guide future provincial investment and inform transformation in community development programs and policies.”³⁶ The Province released a discussion paper, and has undergone a consultation process in different centres across Manitoba.

Given the importance of CBOs socially and economically as well as the macro and local challenges they face, a non-profit strategy is needed for Manitoba. This strategy should be co-created with community stakeholders so the expertise of community is utilized to create an effective, targeted strategy. This allows community and government to work together toward common goals in community development and supporting CBOs.

Funding challenges remain a key concern for CBOs in Manitoba. Manitoba’s community development sector requires core, multi-year, predictable funding that is tied to reasonably evalu-

ated outcomes, administered through a simple, accessible application and reporting process. Successful, effective projects in targeted communities should receive long-term support, particularly neighbourhoods, rural communities, and Northern regions that face multiple barriers.

On April 4, 2019, the Province announced significant changes to community-led development funding, combining seven funding streams into the Building Sustainable Communities Program (BSC). Budgeted spending over the 2019-20 year is promised at \$7.9 million, consistent with spending on the seven legacy programs.³⁷

BSC will not fund projects beyond two years. It will not fund salaries or other employment costs, which are required to run key community development programming. Funding is available up to \$75,000, and proponents must demonstrate 50 per cent of project costs funded from other sources, with a minimum of 10 percent from non-governmental sources. It does not fund administrative costs beyond 2.5%, when the charitable sector standard for administration costs is 10-20%. This set of factors compels CBOs to develop other funding sources, and potentially rely on precarious fundraising campaigns to fund proven, long-term projects. The evaluation or measurement of qualification remains very broad.

While BSC streamlines funding applications into a one window application process, it now is open to any non-profit, charity, or municipality competing for dollars to meet the very general criteria of helping “to build thriving, sustainable communities.”³⁸ The BSC Program now includes two funding streams, namely the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund and the Community Initiatives Program, that were previously part of the Neighbourhoods Alive! (NA!) program and available to NRCs and other CBOs in designated communities. While these NA! programs previously targeted low-income communities, now CBOs in these areas must compete for general dollars available to municipalities, charities, and other non-profits across the province, leav-

ing them in jeopardy of receiving less targeted support. While core funding for NRCs is stable until 2021, the NA! program has been otherwise eliminated.³⁹ Further, the objectives of place-based community development under the NA! program are threatened by having simply one general funding stream. Other programs for specific community development funding for rural, Northern, and other communities have been subsumed by the BSC program.

The changes in funding criteria as well as a less targeted program purpose outlined above, compared against the previous NA! criteria, means that more affluent communities will have an edge over poor communities with less capacity and access to volunteer and financial resources.⁴⁰

Significant changes are needed if the Building Sustainable Communities (BSC) Program is to properly support the sector. Notably, this includes reinstating a targeted community development approach, supporting long-term, successful projects, adequately funding program, staff, evaluation, and administrative costs, and strengthening the predictability of public funding.

APB Improvements

The Department of Municipal Relations should co-create and co-implement its Non-Profit Strategy for Community Development with community organizations and their relevant networks, considering strengths and challenges of the sector.

The Department of Municipal Relations should renew and restructure the Building Sustainable Communities program for community-led development with multi-year, streamlined funding, with the following characteristics:

- a. A targeted approach with a clear mandate and outcomes for community development across Manitoba, including a focus that identifies and invests in key neighbourhoods and communities in the greatest need of physical, social and economic revitalization.

- b. Fund multi-year agreements to a maximum of five years for eligible CBOs, including core funding commitments to NRCs. Funding should include administrative, program, and project costs, including funding for program salaries, evaluation and outcome reporting, and cost of living increases. Long-term, effective NRC projects (previously funded by the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund) should be brought into core funding agreements.
- c. Effective communication channels between the Province of Manitoba and CBOs by reducing red tape and the administrative burden for application, renewal, and reporting, and renewing reporting and outcome measuring mechanisms in collaboration with CBOs.
- d. Predictability of provincial funding, helping CBOs leverage funding from other non-government sources and enabling more organizational stability and sustainability.
- e. Support for CBO capacity building services to promote effectiveness, professional development, sustainability within the sector, and an 'ecosystem' approach to the community development network in Manitoba.

In order to implement the above, funding will be increased by \$2.1M. The increase should include the cost of bringing NRF into core NRC funding, more multi-year funding for re-organization, cost of living increases, and salary costs. It should also include funding for 24-hour safe spaces across the province, as discussed in the Justice chapter.

Total New Expenditure: \$2.1M

C: Gang Prevention-Exit Strategy

Manitoba and Winnipeg consistently have among the highest levels of crime and youth gang ac-

tivity when compared to other provinces and cities in Canada. Despite the tireless work and advocacy of groups like the Gang Action Inter-agency Network, the Government of Manitoba has not formulated or implemented any coordinated gang prevention or gang exit strategy or program. The APB would have the Government of Manitoba act as a leader in addressing gang violence in our province through investing in the creation of a coordinated gang prevention/exit strategy and program, which would involve tailored programing targeting for at-risk newcomer and Indigenous youth.

Increased Operating Expenditure: \$1.71M

D: Gender-Based Violence

Gender-based violence (GBV) is an epidemic that cuts across all demographics — race, class, age, ability, sexual orientation and gender identity. It is not a new issue facing communities, but it has been a difficult one to both address and resolve. Because it is accompanied with shame and stigma, this violence often goes unreported. Low investigation rates and even lower conviction rates continue to be deterrents for women to come forward.

While it is possible for anyone to be a victim of violence, women, transgender, Two-Spirit and gender non-conforming people are at a much more significant risk. Across Canada, women are at a 20 per cent higher risk of violent victimization than men, and Manitoba in particular has the second highest rate of gender-based violence among the provinces.⁴¹ Indigenous women in Canada are killed at six times the rate of non-Indigenous women.⁴² Between 2009 and 2014, 342,000 women in Canada were victims of intimate partner violence (IPV).⁴³ Despite the fact that this number is already high, it is well known that much of the intimate partner violence that occurs — approximately 70 per cent — is still not reported to police.⁴⁴ Given this fact, the true numbers of women experiencing violence are

staggering. When we apply an intersectional lens to GBV data, we see that trans women are twice as likely as cis-gender women to experience intimate partner violence, a risk that increases if they are also people of colour, Indigenous, and/or youth.⁴⁵ Immigrant and refugee women are also overrepresented among victims of intimate partner violence.⁴⁶

In 2012, Manitoba released a Domestic Violence Prevention Strategy, articulating much of the work that needed to be invested in, in order to reduce rates of violence against women in the province. Since that time, levels of funding to the Family Violence Prevention Program have remained relatively stagnant, with funding levels to agencies providing gender-based violence supports not even keeping pace with rates of inflation. Many of the recommendations made in the report remain unaddressed. In order to truly tackle the issue of violence against women, we must increase investment in both support services and prevention.

MMIWG Inquiry Final Report

In June 2019, *Reclaiming Power and Place: The Final Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls*⁴⁷ was released, detailing a number of recommendations resulting from the National Inquiry. Many of the Calls for Justice speak directly to changes that must be implemented in order to reduce the genocide occurring against Indigenous women, girls, trans and Two-Spirit people in Canada. Given that Manitoba has a high number of Indigenous people in the province and Winnipeg has the highest level of urban Indigenous citizens, any efforts to address GBV must be informed by the full findings of this report.

Recognizing that reporting continues to be a persistent barrier to addressing gender-based violence and that is linked to stigma and shame as well as a history of the justice system not believing victims, the MMIWG final report calls

for measures to address laws and policies as well as work on educating the general public on the issue. Key recommendations of the report are addressed here:

1.9 We call upon all governments to develop laws, policies, and public education campaigns to challenge the acceptance and normalization of violence.⁴⁸ Further, recognizing that in Manitoba in particular, levels of violence against Indigenous women and girls far exceeds that against non-Indigenous women and girls, efforts to support victims of violence must be Indigenous-led. While there is one Violence Against Women (VAW) shelter in Winnipeg that is Indigenous-led and operated, the remaining services are not, despite serving a high percentage of Indigenous women. All services should be required to be well trained and educated in Indigenous history and the history of colonial violence in Canada and its impact on the current genocide occurring against Indigenous women and girls. Wherever possible, centres should be led by Indigenous people and all centres should include Indigenous staff members, including Elder supports. This is reflected in the Calls for Justice:

4.7 We call upon all governments to support the establishment and long-term sustainable funding of Indigenous-led low-barrier shelters, safe spaces, transition homes, second-stage housing, and services for Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA people who are homeless, near homeless, dealing with food insecurity, or in poverty, and who are fleeing violence or have been subjected to sexualized violence and exploitation. All governments must ensure that shelters, transitional housing, second-stage housing, and services are appropriate to cultural needs and available wherever Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA people reside.⁴⁹

Expanding Language to Gender-Based Violence

One of the barriers to accessing support services for women experiencing violence lies in the name and the definition. VAW shelters are equipped to support women experiencing domestic violence — specifically intimate partner violence. Despite attempts to broaden this definition to include other forms of gender-based violence, often these kinds of referrals are declined by VAW shelters.

In November 2019, the provincial government took positive steps to expand the definition of violence covered under Manitoba's Domestic Violence Leave, broadening the eligibility to including what it called interpersonal violence, sexual assault and stalking.⁵⁰ This amendment also expanded eligibility to include instances where women did not know their assailant — a critical addition.

While this is a significant step forward in addressing gender-based violence, this broadened definition needs to now be applied to the entire sector. As long as VAW shelters continue to use a more narrowed definition when assessing eligibility for services, women will continue to be at increased risk. This will also require further investments in VAW shelters to ensure that they have staff teams that are equipped to adequately support women in varying states of trauma.

Investments in Gender-Based Violence Prevention

24/7 Safe Space

While Manitoba has 10 violence against women shelters throughout the province, for many this is not the answer that is needed. Shelters have complex intake processes and specific criteria that must be met prior to a person receiving support. For many, these present barriers that are difficult to overcome and often leave them staying in unsafe situations. The current

VAW shelter system was not designed to support transgender, Two-Spirit and gender non-conforming people and while efforts are being made to make these services more inclusive, currently many people do not find safety there. In the case of women who are victims of violence and are also insecurely housed or experiencing homeless, VAW shelters are rarely an option. These women are often resistant to accessing homeless shelters, as many women have experienced violence in these shelters and are considered to be unsafe. The traditional homeless shelter model was designed around a man's experience of homelessness and the shelters in Winnipeg have not applied an intersectional gender-based analysis to improve their services for women. Further, these shelters lack the trauma training required to support women who have experienced violence.

Connecting the Circle: A Gender-Based Strategy to End Homelessness in Winnipeg,⁵¹ released in September 2019, recognized this critical gap in service and made the following recommendations:

- 1.9. Ensure diverse women, trans, Two-Spirit, and gender non-conforming people experiencing housing insecurity and homelessness have access to a low-barrier safe space 24 hours a day. Support those spaces to use an intersectional gender-based analysis in the design and delivery of services that meet basic needs and connect to resources that address homelessness.⁵²

A low-barrier 24/7 safe space that is staffed with trauma-informed workers would allow all women, trans, Two-Spirit and gender non-conforming people to access both safety and support in critical moments — at any time of day — without the restrictions often faced when accessing shelter. This could be accomplished with an increased investment in an existing women's resource centre that is currently operational during regular business hours, in order to expand operations to 24 hours. This would require an increased

investment of \$850,000 annually, to cover both staffing and operational expenses.

Specialized Shelter Services

Currently women experiencing violence are often turned away from existing VAW shelters because their needs are complex. Women who use substances, women with complex mental health conditions, women experiencing violence that is not at the hands of their intimate partner and people with minority gender identities are not well supported within the current systems. These are also women who are often at higher risks of violence. This is recognized as a service gap in *Connecting the Circle*, through the following recommendation:

- 2.1 Expand the mandate of the Family Violence Prevention Program to include all forms of gender-based violence so that women, trans, Two-Spirit, and gender non-conforming people who have experienced violence can access a securely-located and gender-specific emergency shelter that offers gender-based violence supports regardless of who perpetrated the violence or where the violence took place.⁵³

Recognizing that the current shelter system is not designed to meet the unique needs of many women, and that the two Winnipeg VAW shelters are almost consistently at capacity, investments should be made to open a new, more specialized gender-based violence shelter in the city of Winnipeg. This shelter should have a mandate to serve women who are experiencing both violence and homelessness, as they are at high risk of further violence, disappearance and death. This can also be done in partnership with the Addictions Foundation of Manitoba, as suggested in the Manitoba Domestic Violence Prevention Strategy, to ensure that proper resources are in place to support women who are using substances. The annual operating budget of a new shelter would be approximately \$1.8

million, and the capital cost of building it would be approximately \$5M.

Total Operating Expenditure Increases

24/7 safe space for women, trans, Two-Spirit, and gender non-conforming people who have experienced violence: \$.85M

New GBV shelter in Winnipeg operating expenses: \$1.8M

Total: \$2.65M

Total Capital Expenditure Increase

Capital costs of building new GBV shelter: \$5M

Total Operating Expenditure for Municipal Relations:

Study for municipal own-source revenue: \$5M

Community Development initiatives: \$7.1M

Gang Prevention Strategy: \$1.71M

Gender Based Violence initiatives: \$2.65M

Total: \$16.46M

Total Capital Expenditure for Municipal Relations:

New GBV shelter: \$5M

¹ CBC News. (2018). 'The north is truly hurting': Thompson mayor frustrated he can't get meeting with premier. Available at: <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/manitoba/thompson-mayor-frustrated-brian-pallister-1.4786535>

² Kives, B. (February 12, 2019). 'Flatly declined': Bowman says Pallister won't meet to resolve funding dispute. CBC. Available at: <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/manitoba/winnipeg-mayor-premier-meeting-1.5016030>

³ Kives, B. (February 4, 2019). Bowman seeks meeting with Pallister over latest city-provincial funding tiff. CBC. Available at: <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/manitoba/bowman-pallister-winnipeg-manitoba-funding-1.5005771>

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