

Recreation

Recreation is vulnerable to budget cuts because it is viewed as a non-essential service. This needs to change. We know that physical activity is correlated with positive health outcomes, yet in Canada, only 48 per cent of the population aged 12 and over reported engaging in physical activities in their leisure time.¹ Only 9 per cent of Canadian kids aged 5 to 7 are getting the recommended 60 minutes of exercise per day.² Recreation however is not just about developing physical health; programs can also foster social, intellectual, creative, and spiritual well-being. According to the city's own documents, recreation holds the power to "strengthen families, build healthy communities, improve quality of life, support the healthy development of children and provide an opportunity to develop leadership skills."³ Recreation can also be an effective way to prevent some high risk youth from getting involved with crime. By increasing access to recreational services we have the opportunity to improve quality of life for *all* Winnipeggers.

Unfortunately, reductions in the 2018 Budget do not strengthen the city's recreation services, making it unlikely it will reach its stated goal to be a "leader in delivering recreation services that build healthy communities".⁴ The 2018 Operational Budget will see a decrease of 4.75 M in expenditures from the 2017 Recreation Budget.

Fees

Fees for recreational programming increased moderately. While some suggest that recreation programs and facilities should generate enough fees to cover their costs, this strategy does not work in lower-income areas where cost represents a significant barrier. Any increase in fees may lead to decreased participation which in turn may result in further deterioration of programming. That is to say, that the fewer people that participate, the fewer programs will be offered

and a vicious cycle of decreased participation/programming cuts may follow. In low-income neighbourhoods, recreation programming should be viewed as an investment that can help to offset the costs of socio-economic related problems, especially youth crime.

Programming Hours

The 2018 budget shows that wading pools hours were reduced from 26,174 in 2014 to 22,422 in 2016.⁵ The number of hours of spray pad free programming however increased significantly from 13,393 in 2014 to 18,446 in 2016 which reflects the opening of Machray Park and Park City West Spray Pads as well as the re-opening of the Kinsmen Transcona Spray Pad.⁶ This represents a positive step as spray pads are free to all, provide relief from heat waves, and represent accessible community spaces.

Community advocates stated that improvements to existing wading pools and the increase in the numbers of splash pads has been well received in their communities and the City of Winnipeg should be applauded for their efforts in this area and continue to make these spaces accessible to all regardless of their ability to pay.

Funding for Community Centres

The budget for 63 community centres in the City of Winnipeg was 9.46 million in the 2018 budget, an increase of .37 million from the 2016 budget.⁷ There is \$538,000 in programming funds that community centres can apply for. Community centres also count on \$150,000 per year from the province in capital grants. Ninety percent of community centers have paid staff, however community centres still have to rely largely on volunteers, a strategy that does not work well for lower-income and more transient neighbourhoods. Community advocates reported wide discrepancies in both services and capital assets between low-income and higher-income neigh-

TABLE 1 Operating Budget 2017–18

Operating Budget (Recreation) Millions of Dollars

	2017	2018
Revenues	13.363	13.442
Expenses	58.562	53.808

COMPILED FROM: City of Winnipeg 2017. “Community Services Department 2018–2020 Budget”. Standing Policy Committee on Protection, Community Services, and Parks. December 4 2017.

bourhoods demonstrating a need for targeted strategy to upkeep both the structures and programming for community centres in Winnipeg’s more marginalized communities.

Facility Decline and Disrepair

Aging city facilities have had their maintenance budgets cut to the point that many facilities are falling behind recommended standards of repair. This occurred with the Sherbrook Pool. While ensuring that this facility remained open in the community was a positive step, the cost of repairs from letting the building fall into disrepair for so many years was pegged at \$2.7 million.⁸ One of the biggest challenges for the recreation budget however remains the infrastructure deficit. According to the 2018 City Budget \$453.4M needs to be invested over the next 10 years in order to bring all recreation, leisure, community centres, arenas and pools to a reasonable Facility Conditions Index ratio.⁹

Positive Steps

In 2016, the new/expanded annual pass subsidy was launched by the city and replaced the 10-visit subsidy pass. In 2015, 585 ten-visit passes were issued, while in 2016 2,416 annual passes were issued. This represents a positive step toward allowing those with low income to participate in recreation however, other barriers remain. Community activists reported that many people do not know how to apply for passes, may lack the documentation to apply, may experience language barriers and some stated that their participants

feel embarrassed to apply for low-income subsidy programs and passes.

The city instituted a weekly women-only swim program at Kinsmen Sherbrook Pool which respects the cultural and religious beliefs of the Muslim faith. Between 2015 and 2016, registered course fee subsidy registrations saw an increase of 22 percent demonstrating both demand and improved promotion of the subsidy program. The city should be applauded for their efforts at increasing participation.

Recommendations

Supporting Partnerships Between City and Community Agencies

Community centres were frequently mentioned during our community consultations as representing an area where improvements need to be made. Many community advocates stated that the community centre model that is employed across the city does not work for lower-income areas because it relies heavily on volunteerism which doesn’t work well in more transient neighbourhoods.

One model that advocates have called for is already being employed in some neighbourhoods such as Spence and Turtle Island and could be expanded. The city maintains ownership and operation of the facility and provides a small number of staff while the partnering organization designs and operates the programming (in this case Spence Neighbourhood Association and Ma Mawi Wi Chi Itata Centre). Such a move aligns well with the stated goal in *Our Winnipeg* to “Deliver community and neighbourhood-managed recreation services by maintaining ongo-

ing support for developing community centres with public, not-for-profit and private partner”.¹⁰

Dedicated and targeted funding for community agencies that already demonstrate strong recreation leadership should be supported. Existing groups should receive current funding through operational grants to run and program the facilities as these groups can grow usage of these facilities as well as make sure that the facilities are meeting the communities’ needs. Operational funding would also allow these organizations to better hire local residents and to train and support them.

New Expenditure:

- Fund two agencies (\$285,000 per agency): \$570,000

Increase Grants Funding to Non-Charging Community Based-Organizations Providing Recreation Opportunities by 10 per cent

In aligning with the recommendations from “Winnipeg Without Poverty: Calling on the City to Lead”,¹¹ the city should increase its grants by 10 per cent to non-charging community-based organizations that deliver recreation (e.g. arts, sports, music) programming and index future increases to inflation.¹² Grants should include staffing as an eligible expense. Additional targeted funding should be made available to organizations in low-income areas to ensure their programming can remain free and accessible.

New Expenditure:

- Increase grants to community-based organizations: \$16,000

Increase Outreach Services to Low-Income Families to Promote Recruitment into and Maintain Participation in Recreation Programs

The city has produced the Everyone Can Play Guide, a guide for service providers and organizations working with families who experience barriers to recreation and sport participation. This is

a helpful document. Increase staffing support is needed however, both within the city to increase participation in city recreation programming and ensure that existing subsidies provided are used.

Following recommendations from the Winnipeg Community Sport Policy’s “North End Sport Forum Report”¹³ the city should hire two Community Development workers who help those registering complete the subsidy forms as well as perform other outreach duties that increase engagement.

Community advocates stated that many of their community members are not aware of programming in their areas. Social media can be an important marketing tool- especially for youth, however city policy does not allow staff to post city matters on social media. Investigating and adopting new marketing strategies would help improve up-take of leisure activities and programs city-wide which in turn could increase the number of registration fees paid.

New Expenditure:

- Two paid staff who are dedicated to outreach and engagement activities, programming promotion and supporting subsidized registrations: \$116,000

Funds to Bridge Infrastructure Deficit

An on-going challenge for the recreation budget is the infrastructure deficit, as highlighted in previous AMBs. The 2018 State of Infrastructure Report found that the overall condition of the assets in the Community Services Infrastructure element is “Fair trending toward Poor; however, a significant number are in Poor to Very Poor condition”.¹⁴ According to the 2018 City Community Trends and Performance report, \$453.4 M needs to be invested over the next 10 years in order to bring all recreation, leisure, community centres, arenas and pools to a reasonable Facility Conditions Index ratio.¹⁵

According to city’s 2014 Preliminary Operating Budget, \$319.3M needed to be invested over

10 years to bring facilities to the reasonable Facility Condition Index ratio.¹⁶ As of 2018, the City estimates \$453.4M is now required.¹⁷ Converting the 2014 figure to 2018 dollars (\$340.9M) allows us to see how that figure has changed over four years. From 2014 to 2018, the amount needed to put recreation facilities in reasonable shape has increased in inflation adjusted terms by \$112.5M (\$453.4M–\$340.9M).

Furthermore, while the city invested \$61.8M over 6 years in 2014, it is only spending \$62.6M in 2018.¹⁸ Converting 2014's spending to 2018 dollars gives us \$66M, giving us a real spending decrease of \$3.4M from 2014 to 2018. This decrease in investment combined with the rate of decline in the infrastructure is causing the infrastructure deficit to grow at the alarming rate of 33 per cent. As we saw with the case of the Sherbrook Pool, it costs the city significantly more when facility maintenance and repair is ignored.

According to the city's own document "Community Services are forecasted to have 1 percent less of the overall tax-supported capital plan dedicated to its infrastructure needs compared to historical allocations, which is not sufficient to address the growing deficit."¹⁹ The AMB increases capital spending for recreation facilities by \$45.3M²⁰ to address this growing infrastructure gap. This increase will require that the city work with partners at other levels of government (i.e. Manitoba Health, Regional Health Authority and the Federal government) to create an infrastructure fund that will prevent the closure of more facilities due to disrepair. Finally, the significant capital investment required in city facilities cannot be addressed through ad hoc spending. A strategic plan that employs best practices in developing efficiencies within and between city facilities needs to be developed. Such a plan should include a way to develop greater energy efficiencies within municipal facilities, our final recommendation.

New Expenditure:

Increased capital spending on recreation facilities \$45.3M

- Debt Servicing @ 3.6% \$2.47M

Study on Improving Energy Efficiency in City-Run Facilities

Capital investment in city facilities is necessary however long-term strategic thinking about how to save money is required. One of the most obvious places to save (without reducing programs) is to examine how city recreational facilities could be more energy efficient. Manitoba Hydro examined how to improve energy efficiency in municipal recreational facilities.²¹ Aging recreational facilities are more difficult to retrofit, so creative solutions are needed. Other municipalities have established 'Green Revolving Funds' which are energy-efficiency financing tools that use savings from previous efficiency projects and re-invests those savings into new projects.²² Creative solutions such as this should be explored through a study aimed at reducing the capital costs of maintaining older, less energy efficient city-run facilities. Such an effort would comply with the AMB's sustainable budgeting principals, as explained in the Introduction and Environment section.

New Expenditure:

- Study on improving energy efficiency in city-run facilities: \$200,000

Total New Expenditures:

- Fund two agencies (\$285,000 per agency): \$570,000
- Increase grants to community-based organizations: \$16,000
- Two paid outreach staff: \$116,000
- Debt Servicing: \$2.47M
- Energy efficiency study: \$200,000

Total: \$3.372M

-
- 1 Statistics Canada. No date. *Leisure-time physical activity, by sex, household population aged 12 and over, Canada, provinces and territories (table)*. Table 105-4033. CANSIM (database). Retrieved April 11 2018 from <http://www5.statcan.gc.ca/cansim/a26?lang=eng&id=1054033>
 - 2 Participaction. 2016. "Are Canadian Kids Too Tired to Move? 2016 Participaction Report Card on Physical Activity for Children and Youth. Retrieved April 12 2018 from <https://www.participaction.com/sites/default/files/downloads/2016%20ParticipACTION%20Report%20Card%20-%20Full%20Report.pdf>
 - 3 City of Winnipeg. 2011. "Recreation". In *Our Winnipeg*, page 58. Retrieved March 18 2018 from <http://www.winnipeg.ca/interhom/CityHall/OurWinnipeg/pdf/OurWinnipeg.pdf>
 - 4 City of Winnipeg. 2011. "Recreation". In *Our Winnipeg*, page 58. Retrieved March 18 2018 from <http://www.winnipeg.ca/interhom/CityHall/OurWinnipeg/pdf/OurWinnipeg.pdf>
 - 5 City of Winnipeg. 2017. "Community Trends and Performance Report." Retrieved April 9 2018 from <http://www.winnipeg.ca/interhom/budget/2018budget/default.stm>
 - 6 Ibid
 - 7 City of Winnipeg. 2018. "Preliminary Budget: Operating and Capital: Volume 2." Page 87. Retrieved April 4 2018 from http://www.winnipeg.ca/finance/files/2018PreliminaryBudget_Volume2.pdf
 - 8 CBC Online. "Cost to Fix, Reopen Sherbrook Pool Pegged at \$6.2M". Retrieved March 13 2018 from <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/manitoba/cost-to-fix-reopen-sherbrook-pool-pegged-at-6-2m-1.1328675>
 - 9 City of Winnipeg. 2017. "Community Trends and Performance Report." Retrieved April 9 2018 from <http://www.winnipeg.ca/interhom/budget/2018budget/default.stm>
 - 10 City of Winnipeg. 2011. "Recreation". In *Our Winnipeg*, page 58. Retrieved March 18 2018 from <http://www.winnipeg.ca/interhom/CityHall/OurWinnipeg/pdf/OurWinnipeg.pdf>
 - 11 Make Poverty History Manitoba. 2018. "Winnipeg Without Poverty: Calling on the City to Lead. Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, Manitoba. Available at:
 - 12 Ibid.
 - 13 Winnipeg Community Sport Policy. 2016. "North End Sport Forum Report." Winnipeg Manitoba.
 - 14 City of Winnipeg. 2018. "2018 State of the Infrastructure Report." Retrieved March 26 2018 from <http://www.winnipeg.ca/infrastructure/pdfs/State-of-Infrastructure-Report-2018.pdf>
 - 15 City of Winnipeg. 2017. "Community Trends and Performance Report." Page 110. Retrieved April 9 2018 from <http://www.winnipeg.ca/interhom/budget/2018budget/default.stm>
 - 16 City of Winnipeg. 2014. "Preliminary 2014 Operating Budget." Page 104. Retrieved from <http://www.winnipeg.ca/Finance/files/2014PreliminaryBudgetVolume1.pdf> The figure calculated here includes indoor pools; community centres/soccer/arena complexes; recreation centres/leisure centres; arenas; wading pools and outdoor pools. It excludes field houses; daycares; libraries; and senior centres.
 - 17 City of Winnipeg. 2017. "Community Trends and Performance Report." Page 110. Retrieved April 9 2018 from <http://www.winnipeg.ca/interhom/budget/2018budget/default.stm>
 - 18 City of Winnipeg. 2014. "Preliminary 2014 Operating Budget." Page 6. Retrieved from <http://www.winnipeg.ca/Finance/files/2014PreliminaryBudgetVolume1.pdf> And: City of Winnipeg. 2018. "Preliminary Budget: Operating and Capital." Volume 2. Page 36. Retrieved April 4 2018 from http://www.winnipeg.ca/finance/files/2018PreliminaryBudget_Volume2.pdf
 - 19 City of Winnipeg. 2018. "City of Winnipeg 2018 City Asset Management Plan." Retrieved April 12 2018 from <http://www.winnipeg.ca/infrastructure/pdfs/City-Asset-Management-Plan-2018.pdf>
 - 20 This figure was derived from the estimation by the City of Winnipeg's Community Trends and Performance report that \$453.4M is required over the next ten years to bring all facilities up to a reasonable Facility Conditions Index ratio. As the AMB is a one-year budget, this estimation by the city was divided by ten to arrive at the one-year total. See City of Winnipeg. 2014. "Preliminary 2014 Operating Budget." Page 6. Retrieved from <http://www.winnipeg.ca/Finance/files/2014PreliminaryBudgetVolume1.pdf>
 - 21 Manitoba Hydro Power Smart Division. "Energy Efficiency Guide for Municipal Recreation Facilities." Retrieved March 29 2018 from https://www.hydro.mb.ca/your_business/recreation_facilities/energy_efficiency_guide_recreation.pdf
 - 22 City of Edmonton website. "Energy Management Revolving Fund. Retrieved April 12 2018 from https://www.edmonton.ca/city_government/environmental_stewardship/energy-retrofit-program.aspx