



### **CM25-19 2026-2027 Budget Deliberations**

Your Worship and Members of City Council,

Heritage Regina wishes to address several of the Budget Adjustment Options that city council will review as part of its budget deliberations.

For over 49 years, Heritage Regina has provided educational programming that celebrates the vibrant and storied history of our community. We have also worked side by side with city staff, property owners, developers, realtors, skilled craftspeople, architects, local and provincial institutions, and the public to find ways to preserve, reuse, and celebrate the heritage spaces, buildings and the stories of this city. Regina became a leader in heritage conservation in 2019 with the implementation of the new Heritage Inventory Policy, followed by the Heritage Maintenance Policy in 2023.

Appendix M-13 identifies items #42 Heritage Incentives and #43 Heritage Staff as potential cost saving options for the city. Heritage Regina firmly believes the negative impacts of eliminating the heritage incentives program and the heritage staff would far outweigh any cost savings and have long lasting negative consequences for our city.

#### **1. Impact on Heritage Conservation and Property Stewardship:**

**Heritage buildings require specialized materials and skilled labour—significantly more costly than standard construction. Without financial support, Regina’s heritage inventory will rapidly decline.**

- Heritage incentives help owners:
- Maintain and repair character-defining elements
- Use appropriate conservation materials
- Meet building and safety codes
- Prevent deterioration and demolition by neglect
- Without these supports:
- Many owners cannot afford proper maintenance
- Deferred repairs accelerate decay
- Unsafe building orders rise
- Demolition becomes the cheaper, default option
- The city loses leverage to negotiate conservation outcome

#### **2. Impact on Economic Development & Downtown Revitalization:**

**Economic Value Lost - Heritage buildings are economic engines—not liabilities.**

- Heritage consistently generates:
- Higher pedestrian traffic
- Stronger small-business activity

- Greater tourism draw
- Higher economic performance than non-heritage areas
- Employment for trades, design, maintenance etc.
- If incentives disappear:
- Heritage investment declines
- More buildings sit vacant or deteriorate
- Adjacent non-heritage properties lose value
- Once a building is lost it is gone forever
- Small businesses avoid unstable or unattractive areas
- Regina becomes less competitive in attracting creative and knowledge-sector industries

### **3. Downtown Decline & Increased Safety Risks:**

**Heritage buildings bring people downtown; empty lots do the opposite.**

- When buildings sit empty or are demolished:
- Streets become emptier, darker, and less safe
- Vacant buildings/lots attract vandalism, break-ins, and fires
- Public safety demands increase
- Policing costs rise as investment in cultural assets falls

Defunding heritage does not save money—it shifts costs into policing and crisis response, leaving the city less vibrant and less safe

### **4. Impact on Environmental Sustainability:**

**Heritage rehabilitation is one of the strongest climate-positive actions a city can take. Removing incentives directly contradicts Regina’s sustainability commitments.**

- Demolishing heritage buildings has major environmental consequences:
- Loss of embedded energy stored in existing buildings
- Significant carbon emissions from new construction
- Tonnes of landfill waste
- Lost opportunity for adaptive reuse

### **5. Loss of Inspection, Oversight, & Enforcement:**

- The integrity of the entire heritage program collapses without professional oversight.
- Heritage staff currently:
- Monitor designated properties
- Ensure compliance with heritage guidelines
- Provide technical advice to owners
- Prevent inappropriate alterations
- Enforce maintenance standards
- If staff positions disappear:
- No one monitors buildings for deterioration leading to increased demolition requests
- Unsafe conditions can go unnoticed
- Inappropriate alterations or neglect may go unchecked
- The City risks non-compliance with its own bylaws and OCP policies

### **6. Impact on Municipal Capacity, Governance & Bylaw Integrity**

**If heritage staff are eliminated:**

- No professional expertise exists to administer designations
- Incentive applications stall
- Enforcement becomes irregular or nonexistent

- Property owners lack support navigating complex heritage standards
- The city risks failing to uphold its own bylaws and OCP

Public trust erodes when the city cannot maintain its own commitments.

## **7. Broader Citywide Effects: Safety, Livability & Urban Identity**

### **If heritage programs are defunded, Regina becomes:**

- Less safe, due to more derelict structures and vacant lots
- More expensive to police, as vandalism and crime rise
- Less beautiful and less vibrant
- Less economically resilient
- Less culturally connected
- More environmentally wasteful
- More at risk of losing irreplaceable heritage

Heritage is not nostalgia - it is an active investment in the health, safety, identity, and economic strength of the city.

Heritage conservation is not a luxury - it is a crucial component of a safe, sustainable, economically vibrant, culturally rich city.

Regarding budget reduction options listed under Cultural and Recreational Services, items 52 – 77 in Appendix M-13, Heritage Regina stands firmly opposed. We believe that all the programs, services and direct supports to non-profit organizations provided under the Community Investments Program are critical to maintain the social and cultural fabric of our community. Without these programs, Regina becomes unrecognizable.

## **Impact on Our Community**

### **1. Loss of Cultural and Community Grant Streams**

#### **The Community Investments Grant Program supports:**

- Cultural programming
- Festivals and neighbourhood projects
- Social development initiatives
- Intangible cultural heritage work
- Community storytelling and education
- Social Support programs

#### **Defunding these streams would:**

- Shrink or eliminate key cultural and social support programming
- Undermine reconciliation-focused initiatives
- Reduce opportunities for underrepresented voices
- Increase inequity, as nonprofits cannot fill funding gaps
- Remove stability provided by multiyear agreement
- Negatively impact the many children, disabled, elderly, economically disadvantaged citizens from experiencing basic recreational, cultural and supportive programming.
- Weaken the ability of the many funded organizations to enrich, educate, and create opportunities that connect us.

### **2. Erosion of Intangible Cultural Heritage**

#### **These grants support:**

- Oral histories
- Languages

- Traditions
- Community practices
- Place-based storytelling

**Without them:**

- Programs documenting these cultural foundations disappear
- Reconciliation efforts are weakened
- Regina's cultural landscape becomes flatter and less diverse
- Job losses for cultural workers and all industry and business connected to cultural institutions, events, and programming
- Erosion of the volunteer sector that supports arts, culture and recreation
- Regina's identity would be diminished

**Conclusion**

Defunding Regina's heritage incentives, the staff who administer and enforce them, and the loss of Community and Cultural Grants would trigger sweeping losses to the social, cultural and recreational fabric of our city that could take decades to recover from. These are losses that the private sector cannot and will not step into and take over. These are losses that will impact far beyond the people and spaces directly impacted.

We encourage Council to review the list of grant recipients and try to imagine Regina without those organizations, events, services and programming. Imagine also those who would lose the opportunity to learn about our history, see a performance, try a new sport or receive help when needed. We encourage you to review the list of designated properties, and incentives provided to date and consider the impact to our community if those spaces were lost. What jobs, what business, what services would be impacted without those buildings and the adapted reuse of these spaces?



Jackie Schmidt, President  
Heritage Regina