

## BNRC Budget Priorities

### 1) Neighbourhood Alive! – NRC Community Led Development Model

As you are aware, there are thirteen Neighbourhood Renewal Corporations (NRCs) in Manitoba, operating in urban, rural and northern areas. We have been an integral part of service delivery to our designated communities, alongside our partners at Neighbourhoods Alive! We have been guided by the principles of Community-led Development (CLD), which acknowledge that service delivery is often more cost-effective through grassroots level institutions that are more attuned to community priorities. Under the guidance of Neighbourhoods Alive! (which was a finalist for a national IPAC award for innovative management in 2015) we have been dedicated to delivering community-based services in a cost-effective, respectful, transparent, accountable, professional, and non-partisan manner.

We attribute our success over the past twenty years to a variety of factors that have paved the way for good efficient work to be done. These include:

- **Our invaluable partnership with Neighbourhoods Alive!** This functional relationship is a prime example of effective relationship building between communities and various government departments
- **The creation of the NPO model.** These agreements are aimed at multi-year funding and reducing red tape. The key benefits of multi-year funding are the efficiencies and savings which result from reduced staff turnover, longer-term commitment to effective projects, and greater organizational stability both operationally and financially. We've found it's also enhanced our ability to attract and leverage funding for long-term projects from private sector and community partners, and even different levels of government.
- **Establishing multi-year plans.** These plans are derived through a comprehensive community consultation process that ensures we identify and engage with the unique priorities of our various communities. This tends to increase community buy-ins to our projects, when local stakeholders know that their input is often instrumental to the design and evaluation of those projects. This also results in greater support for those projects at the grassroots level, as evidenced by the additional funding, volunteer support, and in-kind contributions we are able to leverage for them.

The NDF funding that the BNRC receives as core funding annually has allowed us to expand into housing, large scale homelessness solution projects, an extensive job training and employment program, and a small social enterprise. We leverage the funding receive to create over \$3 million of investment annually in our community in the form of jobs created, community projects, housing construction, and research. Similar expansion beyond core funding based on unique community needs is common for NRCs.

The NRF funding continues to be invaluable to our community in achieving community priorities. These funds are readily used to get projects off the ground that directly improve the lives of community members and address the priorities laid out in the Community 5-year plan. Community-led development principles, as mentioned above, are an important part of our service delivery model. We believe that by including the NRCs more actively in the NRF decision making process, we can ensure that funds are spent as efficient as possible, reducing duplication of

services, leveraging investments for our community, and developing partnerships for more efficient service delivery based on identified community priorities. These funds ensure that communities see needed investment in arts and culture, safety initiatives, wellness and recreation, and economic development.

## 2) Community Solution-Driven Spending

Provincial funding should not be delivered in a “one size fits all” manner. Manitoba communities need the Province to support efficient and effective front line services that focus on wrap around service delivery which sees collaboration, and avoids duplication. Community-led decision making will ensure that funds are spent based on local priorities, identifying costly social issues and focusing on sustainable solutions. This model reduces the high costs governments currently spend on the consequences of social issues, and brings money back into the economy as the number of people contributing increases.

For example, if a community is provided with funding to invest in systems that coordinate services for our most vulnerable and assists them in gaining social, emotional, and physical health, their involvement the health care system will decrease, and they may get to a place where they can maintain employment, and stable housing. A Community-led model also creates more opportunity for collaboration between charities and non-profits delivering services, and the public sector. This, however, requires a commitment on behalf of the Provincial Government to reducing red tape within the public services and allowing front line public service workers the same community driven flexibility to adapt programs to match the work already being done in the community outside of the public service.

## 3) Housing

BNRC is involved in housing across the spectrum of community needs. As the delivery agent for Manitoba Housing programs, the coordinator for the City of Brandon Affordable Housing Strategy, the Community Entity responsible for delivering the Federal Homelessness Partnering Strategy in Brandon and across Manitoba and through two social enterprises, the BNRC has a holistic understanding of the housing spectrum.

### *Provincial Affordable Housing Programs*

Provincial affordable housing programs have seen low or little up take in Brandon for a variety of reasons. There are several solutions the province can consider to make these program more efficient and work better for communities across the province including Brandon.

- **Create a notional allocation for affordable housing funding in communities outside of Winnipeg** - Ensuring the funding is more evenly distributed responds to serious housing needs across the province, alleviating the pressure on support services in more remote locations.
- **Allow for flexibility in program eligibility** – Incorporating local changes that impact programs will make them more effective in a local setting. A community-led model of decision making will ensure that money is spent as effectively as possible in each community. A system modeled after the HPS funding through the federal government

uses Community Entities and Community Advisory Boards to make local decisions about funding and ensures that funds are prioritized in each community and delivered effectively. When considering that the Province already has NRC's in all major locations, the infrastructure already exists to flow this funding for affordable housing to communities.

- **Increase Low Income Cut off eligibility criteria** – Brandon residents who would otherwise qualify for funding under Provincial programs, have been denied because their income was above the income cut off and yet their income is too low to complete the repairs on their own. They are therefore forced to live in unsafe conditions or move out, putting more pressure on our already highly burdened rental market. However, Brandon has always seen Income cutoffs that were significantly lower than Winnipeg with little explanation as to why this is other than “there is a formula and it just works out that way”.
- **Marketing and communication** – The province entered into the agreement with BNRC to deliver their programs under the assumption that marketing would occur locally. Funds were provided based on the number of applications for the programs. However, without a marketing or communications budget, it is a constant struggle to ensure widespread awareness of these programs, leading to low application rates in Brandon. A widespread communications plan, with local collaboration, would be much more effective for making the entire province aware of affordable housing programs.

### *Manitoba Housing*

A blended approach to improving social housing is needed to address the significant need for social housing across the Province. This involves collaboration across all levels of government, not for profits and the private sector to offer social housing units and utilize the established rental market through Income based housing supports.

- **Build new Manitoba Housing Units** - A reliable plan to increase social housing stock needs to be developed with input from the City of Brandon and other community not for profit and private stakeholders. A promise to build new units should also come with geographic targets.
- **Provide Income-based housing supports** – Using the existing housing market infrastructure to offer subsidized affordable units is effective, however maintenance standards must be monitored and supports for landlords who are willing to rent to ‘hard to house’ tenant should be increased. Supports may include direct line of communication between identified landlords and EIA workers; funds to cover the costs of damage caused by tenants; or funding to cover sometimes annual treatment of bedbugs. Support for Housing First has proven to be an effective way of providing permanent housing to “hard to house” clients with supports and after graduating from the program.

### *Bug and Scrub*

BNRC also delivers bed bug remediation services through the Provincial Bug and Scrub funding process. Bed bugs continue to be a major problem across the housing spectrum and the Bug and Scrub program has allowed us to start a small social enterprise which offers employment

opportunities to people who have barriers to employment while at the same time dealing with a significant issue in the housing market.

### *Homelessness*

The Federal Government continues to provide effective funding through the HPS program to help to eliminate homelessness across Canada. They have made Housing First a significant priority in this program as it has been proven to work effectively to combine immediate access to adequate housing with the wrap around supports that person needs to successfully remain housed and eventually live independently. In this regard, we believe the provinces role is one of support. To provide a rent supplement to Housing First Clients and to support landlords through affordable housing funding programs to ensure they continue to offer units at affordable rates to Housing First Clients, as well as low income tenants.

#### **4) Job Training opportunities**

The BNRC also manages the Brandon Energy Efficiency Program (BEEP). BEEP is a construction training program for people with barriers to employment. They do work on a variety of projects including efficiency upgrades, deep retrofits, and landscaping for Manitoba Housing. They are also an approved Manitoba Hydro Power Smart Program contractor, and do work for non-profits providing housing opportunities to homeless and low income individuals. Through the program we offer GED courses, drivers education, and ID replacement programs. We also offer 4 apprentice positions through to the end of Level 2. Once graduated from our program, we assist with career development skills such as resume writing, interview skills, and soft job skills such as attendance and behaviour on the jobsite.

The Provincial Government has a significant opportunity to continue to support social enterprises such as BEEP or Bug and Scrub (as was previously mentioned). These programs rely on the government in a variety of ways including 1) hiring them to do work (such as in the case of the Manitoba Housing work), covering upfront costs of guaranteed payback investment (such as through the PAYS Hydro program), and creating policies that eliminate barriers to get the work done. Social Enterprises focus on finding solutions to social issues, instead of looking for funding to deal with the consequences of social issues. At the same time many social enterprises also provide employment to those who would otherwise be out of a job which keeps them off EIA and very often in better health, reunited with children, and able to contribute more to finding their own stable housing, reducing costs on several provincially funded programs.