



Right to
Housing

43 Minaki Bay
Winnipeg, Manitoba
R2J 2V1

September 26, 2016

His Worship Mayor Brian Bowman
Office of the Mayor, City Hall
510 Main Street
Winnipeg, Manitoba
R3B 1B9

Dear Mayor Bowman:

Re: Proposed Impact Fees

The City Working Group of the Right to Housing Coalition has reviewed your intention to introduce an Impact Fee on new development. Given the financial constraints facing Winnipeg at this time we agree with you that it is equitable for growth to pay for its impact on both local and regional infrastructure. While the inherent benefit of these fees may be to generate sufficient funds to offset the cost of major capital projects made necessary by new development we must not lose sight of the fact that impact fees can have significant other benefits for the City of Winnipeg.

The introduction of impact fees will transfer the cost of major infrastructure projects to those who generate the need thus reducing the tax burden on existing communities. This will be beneficial especially to those low income homeowners and renters who tend to gravitate to older and often deteriorating neighbourhoods in search of affordable housing.

Furthermore, before growth fees can become an effective planning tool that can be used not only to direct new suburban growth but to encourage redevelopment and densification in established neighbourhoods the City must undertake some additional tasks.

It would appear that little or no priority is being placed on housing by the City of Winnipeg. Since the adoption of the City's housing policy in 2014 there has been little progress made to complete the plan. While all of the components outlined in the initial document are important the definition of reinvestment areas within this strategy is essential to the future wellbeing of older, established neighbourhoods and to a meaningful approach to future development of the City. In addition, we note that the Live Downtown grant program expired on September 23.

We are very supportive of waiving impact fees for government funded social and affordable housing. However, we are concerned that universal application of impact fees, as currently proposed, could have more serious consequences on the marginal markets in Winnipeg's inner city than other neighbourhoods. Inner city densification costs the city less in terms of regional infrastructure because residents are less likely to use the regional network of roads and other infrastructure. Moreover, much of the existing infrastructure in these neighbourhoods was built to serve a much larger resident population than now present. The imposition of Impact Fees could seriously impede the progress made by Neighbourhood Renewal Corporations to address vacant lots and derelict housing. Clearly having healthy inner city communities is in the best interest of the City and benefits all Winnipeggers.

Lastly, older neighbourhoods in Winnipeg have seen their infrastructure deteriorate over time because of the increased cost of infrastructure development and renewal within new communities. We would be concerned if the reserve fund cannot be used to improve inner city regional infrastructure that bears much of the load of automobile-centric suburban development. Indeed, the final report from Hemson includes critical infrastructure like community services and transit. We also observe that the initial presentation in July notes that some of Canada's major cities (Vancouver, Toronto and Ottawa) consider affordable housing to be a requirement and include a cost for it in their growth fees. Our Winnipeg and Complete Communities state that affordable housing should be included in all neighbourhoods thus providing rationale for Winnipeg to consider a similar charge.

We note that the Federal Government is investing in social and affordable housing and will be looking to work with the Province and the City through its National Housing Strategy. Beyond waiving impact fees, there is much that the City can do to engage with other levels of government and ensure Winnipeg benefits from this national investment. We trust that the city will give priority to this issue.

We would like to take this opportunity to congratulate you for taking a bold stance on the introduction of Impact Fees and starting to address Winnipeg's financial challenges in a meaningful way. We hope that you will also use your office to take a similarly bold stance on affordable housing. In Calgary, Vancouver, Ottawa and Edmonton we see that one of the major factors in increasing the supply of social and affordable housing is the leadership shown by their Mayors. We trust that you will show the same level of commitment in this issue.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bill Muir". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Bill Muir, Chair
City Working Committee
Right to Housing Coalition

cc: Councillor John Orlikow