

Federal cash could help city avoid drastic cuts: Bowman

JOYANNE PURSAGA

MAYOR Brian Bowman is hoping a lobby for federal cash to help municipalities cope with the COVID-19 pandemic will include enough money for Winnipeg to avoid last-resort cuts.

On Thursday, the Federation of Canadian Municipalities called on Ottawa to provide at least \$10 billion to address pandemic shortfalls, including \$7.6 billion in direct funding (with no matching provincial funds required) and \$2.4 billion for cities with public transit systems.

FCM said financial support is critical to ensuring essential city services can continue. It estimates municipalities could lose \$10 billion to \$15 billion, if physical-distancing directives were to

persist for six months.

“The longer the pandemic goes and the longer the public health orders are in effect, the squeeze on municipal government will increase with each passing month,” Bowman said Thursday.

The mayor said he’s not sure exactly how much funding the City of Winnipeg could get, if the FCM request is granted.

“At this stage, every dollar that they can provide is going to help,” he said.

The city recently revealed several actions it could take to address the local financial fallout from COVID-19, including significant Winnipeg Transit cuts.

In its worst-case scenario, the city said it could reduce capital spending, seek temporary wage reductions for all employees, and pursue more

widespread service reductions and/or layoffs, among other measures.

Bowman said he’s hopeful federal funding could be enough to avoid those drastic cuts.

“The possibility of direct funding for operating budgets for municipalities could go a long way to mitigating some of those layoffs and those decisions down the road,” he said.

However, the mayor said it’s “unlikely” any such funds could arrive in time to avoid the planned switch to an enhanced Saturday service schedule for Transit on weekdays or a related layoff of 253 bus drivers.

During a media call, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau indicated he’s open to working with municipalities to ensure essential services continue.

“We will continue to work with the

provinces, but we’ll also continue to work directly with municipalities to make sure that Canadians get the services they need, get the support they need,” said Trudeau.

In an interview, deputy prime Minister Chrystia Freeland said the federal government does consider the cities to be in urgent need of financial support.

“We are very aware of the urgency of the situation that municipalities across the country face. They are providing essential services and, at the same time, they have seen their revenues fall precipitously through no fault of their own,” said Freeland.

— with files from Dylan Robertson

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Mayor Brian Bowman



Pat Lazo, artistic director of the Graffiti Gallery, shows off the COVID-19 mural he painted on housewrap and stapled to the fence of his Ashland Avenue home with the message ‘This too shall pass.’

MIKAELA MACKENZIE / WINNIPEG FREE PRESS

Pandemic silence inspires artist to create colourful, hopeful message

DANIELLE DA SILVA

PAT LAZO looks forward to the returning sounds of kids shouting and balls bouncing off the hard top at Riverview Community Centre every spring.

But even as temperatures crept past 15 C Thursday afternoon — a warm reprieve from a dreary April in Winnipeg — the basketball courts and playground across from his Ashland Avenue home were quiet; like so many parks across the province, COVID-19 has put a hold on play and driven kids indoors.

“It’s completely silent,” Lazo said

by phone Thursday while minding his three-year-old son Owen. “I’ve had to tell my son the play structure is broken and that we can’t use it every time we walk by.

“You’d wake up and listen to people playing tennis and basketball, and it’s awesome. Now you don’t hear any of that,” he said.

Across from the quiet courts on Darling Street is now a phrase of encouragement offered up by Lazo, and a new piece of public art that serves as a reminder to neighbours that life will return to the area.

Lazo is the artistic director of Graf-

fiti Art Programming, and with the downtown urban art centre temporarily closed, he decided to turn a portion of his neighbourhood into a canvas.

Taking his cues from the Winnipeg Window Gallery Project — a grassroots effort that sees neighbours decorate windows with art for folks to view from the outside — the graffiti artist stapled 15 metres of white housewrap to his exterior fence and over the course of several days painted a mural.

Across the span of canvas written in pink script is “This too shall pass.” The message is set against a backdrop of dark purples and blues, punctuated

with the red viral illustrations that have come to represent the novel coronavirus, that gradually lightens to uplifting shades of green and yellow.

“I figure people are going through stuff before this, and to add all of this on top of it may be too much,” he said. “So I was just hoping to give that message that it will pass, and things will be OK.”

Four years ago, Lazo’s son was born 25 weeks premature and spent 115 days in the neonatal intensive care unit at St. Boniface Hospital. His family developed close relationships with the staff at the hospital and they continue

to think about them during the pandemic, he said.

The words of encouragement have also resonated with staff at Riverview Health Centre, who pass the message daily as they head to work and have expressed their appreciation, Lazo said.

“I’ve tattooed it several times on people over the years and I never gave it much thought, and when my son was born premature I would tell myself that, that it would all work out,” he said.

“It’s sort of a reminder to the community, and to myself... to keep at it.”

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Legals

NOTICE TO CREDITORS

IN THE MATTER OF THE ESTATE OF GUDRUN GRACE NUNN, of the City of Winnipeg, in the Province of Manitoba, deceased.

All claims against the above estate, duly verified by Statutory Declaration, must be sent to the undersigned at 2200 - One Lombard Place, Winnipeg, Manitoba, R3B 0X7, on or before the 29th day of May, 2020.

Dated at Winnipeg, Manitoba, this 21st day of April, 2020.

D'ARCY & DEACON LLP
Per: JOHN E. DEACON, Q.C.
Executor for the Estate

NOTICE TO CREDITORS

IN THE MATTER OF THE ESTATE OF MARGARET LETTY COLONELLO (also known as PEGGY COLONELLO), of the City of Winnipeg, in the Province of Manitoba, deceased.

All claims against the above estate, duly verified by Statutory Declaration, must be sent to the undersigned at 2200 - One Lombard Place, Winnipeg, Manitoba, R3B 0X7, on or before the 29th day of May, 2020.

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Executor for the Estate

Sandwiches are beautiful, fine way to help

JOHN LONGHURST

LIKE many Winnipeggers, Henry Rempel wanted to do something to help people impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. But what?

“I wanted to help, but I’m not supposed to be going outside my home very much,” said Rempel, 64, a retired teacher.

Then he heard 1JustCity, an organization that supports three drop-in community centres in Winnipeg’s core neighbourhoods (West Broadway Community Services, Oak Table at St. Augustine United Church and St. Matthews Maryland Community Ministry), was seeking sandwiches for people experiencing food insecurity.

Rempel put the word out and now about a dozen seniors from River East Church, a Mennonite Brethren congregation in North Kildonan, are busy making bag lunches for the organization.

“It’s a way for us to feel like we’re doing something,” Rempel said of how he not only makes sandwiches, but also picks them up from group members and delivers the goods to 1JustCity’s St. Matthews Maryland Community Ministry location.

Eleanor Martens, who normally volunteers at Siloam Mission and now finds herself “stuck at home,”

quickly signed up. (She usually makes egg, ham and cheese or tuna sandwiches.)

“There are lots of us feeling the same frustration,” said the 73-year-old former nurse manager. “It seemed like a simple thing to do.

“I can’t solve the big problems, but I can do something for people in my community.”

It is a stance Bev Hiebert, 69, understands.

“I felt stuck at home and couldn’t do anything,” said the former director of sales for Ten Thousand Villages Canada.

Making tuna sandwiches for the bag lunches “makes me feel I am a very small part of something larger,” Hiebert said, adding it feels good since she can’t go anywhere else to volunteer these days. “It’s a win-win.”

Altogether, the group contributes between roughly 130 sandwiches a week, along with fruit, a juice box and a granola bar. Rempel and his daughter, Jamila, drive around each Tuesday morning to pick up the food — from a safe social distance.

“Some people leave it on the front steps, others come to the door to put it there when I ring the bell,” he said, noting as seniors they want to be really careful about not catching the novel coronavirus.



Esther and Reynold Redekopp with sandwiches for 1JustCity.

Josh Ward, community facilitator at St. Matthews Maryland Community Ministry, is grateful for the help.

Before the pandemic closed the ministry’s programs, it was providing drop-in meals for about 75 people in the West End, four days a week. He said the number has now doubled, as “people on the edge” have lost jobs and need assistance.

“It’s an amazing effort,” Ward said,

noting the dozen or so people from River East Church are among the 40 to 50 Winnipeggers making bag lunches for 1JustCity each week. The lunches are passed out at the door of the building by staff wearing masks, gowns and goggles, Ward said. Recipients line up at safe social distances.

“It gives us a chance to connect briefly,” said Ward, whose home church is St. Andrews River Heights United Church. “Relationships are at the core of what we are trying to do.”

Lunches are handed out from 1 p.m. to about 3:30 p.m., he said, “or until the food runs out.” Non-perishable food items and other groceries are also available in emergency food kits for families in need.

Currently, more sandwich makers aren’t needed, 1JustCity executive director Tessa Blaikie Whitecloud said, but financial donations are welcome.

Along with using the donations to buy food in bulk to share with community residents, she said it needs funds to pay staff who were hired to replace the volunteers who no longer can serve.

“Many of our volunteers were seniors, and they can no longer help because of the pandemic,” she said.

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