

Janzen, Heather

From: City Council
Subject: FW: Email - Request to Speak - Andrea Lafond - Funding for Meewasin Valley Authority - CK 1700-1
Attachments: 2023 NOVEMBER - Budget Request to COS - FINAL.pdf

From: Web NoReply <web-noreply@Saskatoon.ca>
Sent: Monday, November 20, 2023 3:33 PM
To: City Council <City.Council@Saskatoon.ca>
Subject: Email - Request to Speak - Andrea Lafond - Funding for Meewasin Valley Authority - CK 1700-1

--- Replies to this email will go to [REDACTED] ---

Submitted on Monday, November 20, 2023 - 15:31

Submitted by user: [REDACTED]

Submitted values are:

I have read and understand the above statements.: Yes

I do not want my comments placed on a public agenda. They will be shared with members of Council through their online repository.: No

I only want my comments shared with the Mayor or my Ward Councillor.: No

Date: Monday, November 20, 2023

To: His Worship the Mayor and Members of City Council

First Name: Andrea

Last Name: Lafond

Email: [REDACTED]

Address: 402 3rd Avenue South

City: Saskatoon

Province: Saskatchewan

Postal Code: S7K 3G5

Name of the organization or agency you are representing (if applicable): Meewasin Valley Authority

What do you wish to do ?: Request to Speak

If speaking will you be attending in person or remotely: In person

What meeting do you wish to speak/submit comments ? (if known):: Business Plan and Budget Review

What agenda item do you wish to comment on ?: Funding for Meewasin Valley Authority

Comments:

Hello, I would like to request to speak to Council regarding Meewasin's funding during the Business Plan and Budget Review meetings from November 28-30.

Attachments:

- [2023 NOVEMBER - Budget Request to COS - FINAL.pdf](#)196.53 KB

Will you be submitting a video to be vetted prior to council meeting?: No



Meewasin Valley Authority
402 Third Avenue South
Saskatoon, Saskatchewan S7K3G5
Phone (306) 665-6887 Fax (306) 665-6117

November 20, 2023

Mayor & Council
222 Third Avenue North
Saskatoon, SK S7K 0J5
Via Email: city.clerks@saskatoon.ca

Your Worship, the Mayor, and Saskatoon City Councillors;

First and foremost, I want to thank you for your annual support of Meewasin and its mandate and for the opportunity to speak in support of the ongoing stewardship of the Meewasin Valley in response to the discussion at the August 15, 2023 Governance & Priorities Committee Special Meeting. We appreciate the difficult conversation that the City of Saskatoon is undertaking to address its current budget funding gap; these types of discussions are well known to Meewasin and we would like to take this opportunity to respectfully ask that the recommendation to freeze the CPI increases for Meewasin, for the 2024 (\$42,800) and 2025 (\$36,900) budget years, be reconsidered. The impact to Meewasin core priorities is significant. The compounding effect even more so in 2025 given the loss of two years of CPI adjustments (\$79,700).

Meewasin is not the only organization that was impacted by the decision on August 15. Other organizations doing great work with small budgets that routinely seek out funding will also feel this loss. Meewasin seeks out funding for projects from many sources, but this foundational funding and the additional support that the City allocates for trail infrastructure is invaluable and supports a meaningful natural corridor for a multitude of activities, including active transportation for the citizens of Saskatoon.

The Meewasin Valley is located on Treaty 6 Territory and the homeland of the Métis. It lies within the heart of Saskatoon and provides the foundational backdrop for resident and visitor experiences and small businesses operating in the valley, on the land and water.

Emerging Pressures

Meewasin continues to see demand for its programs and facilities as attention to our natural world and environment increases; significant visitation at Meewasin sites continues as residents and visitors search for local outdoor activities including the Meewasin Skating Rink, Beaver Creek Conservation Area, and the popular Meewasin Trail (2.32 million visits in 2022), supporting active transportation and passive recreation for all ages and abilities.

Meewasin has proven itself a very capable fundraiser and over its history has been able to leverage the funding provided to it by the City of Saskatoon, University of Saskatchewan and Government of Saskatchewan to attract grant funding. However, these additional funds are generally program and project driven and provide little relief from annual inflationary pressures on wages, benefits and overall operating expenses. City Council previously approved the direction to budget for a CPI increase to the annual funding provided to Meewasin, which has allowed for greater predictability in

budgeting, ensuring Meewasin's budget is better able to keep pace with inflation and allowing Meewasin to continue to work to leverage additional funding from other sources.

Meewasin's current collective bargaining agreement with SGEU expired on March 31, 2022 and bargaining is underway. The known and expected changes in Consumer Price Indices will influence the new agreement and will impact Meewasin's ability to maintain current service and staffing levels to an already lean staffing structure. Meewasin has also experienced significant increases in input costs due to inflationary pressures including fuel, materials and supplies.

Funding that does not take into consideration inflationary increases will affect Meewasin's ability to apply for and be successful in attracting grant funding which generally requires matching funds. It will also ultimately result in a reduced level of service commensurate with the level of decrease in anticipated funding.

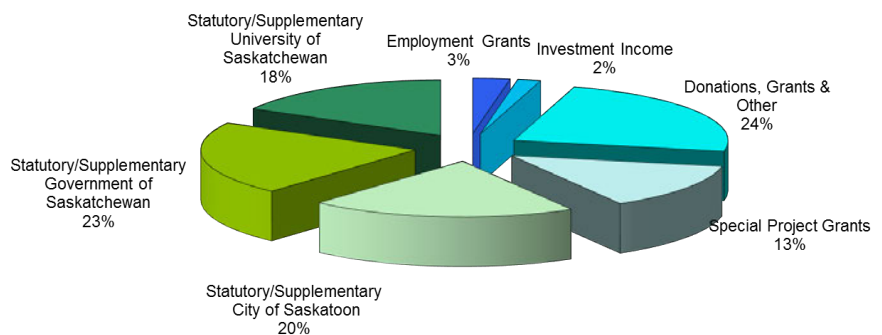
Meewasin strives to provide effective financial management of the funding that it does receive, leveraging these funds to attract additional funding including grants and donations and increase social enterprise revenue through fees for service. For the year ending March 31, 2023 Meewasin reported:

- \$2,708,564 in grant support from 15 local, regional, provincial and federal partners;
- \$418,873 in earned income from 13 local regional and provincial partners; and
- \$1,585,876 in donations from a multitude of individuals, organizations and corporations;

Almost doubling its statutory and supplementary funding (\$2,561,850) from the three participating parties in the same year.

This is not a one-time occurrence; since 1979, Meewasin has leveraged participating party funding to attract outside funds; almost 40% of its revenue has come from these sources. This has resulted in an additional \$65 million dollars invested in the legacy of the Meewasin Valley and this City since 1979.

Meewasin Funding by Source
YE 1980 - 2023
Cumulative



Public Support

Meewasin regularly conducts public opinion surveys; the most recent results show significant and unwavering support for Meewasin:

- 8 out of 10 people agree that Meewasin is under resourced;
- 89% agree that Meewasin is a good use of tax dollars;
- 89% agree that the river valley is the most important attribute to the city;
- 90% agree the Meewasin provides great entertainment options for residents;
- 92% agree that Meewasin's funding should reflect adequate infrastructure resources to support usage;
- 92% agree that trails and natural areas support physical and mental health of Saskatoon residents; and
- 94% agree that Meewasin improves the quality of life in the city.

2024, 2025 and Beyond

Meewasin will continue to focus on a sustainable model and opportunities to support its core areas including:

- continued upgrades to the Meewasin Trail to support safe usage, carrying capacity and accessibility for all ages and abilities;
- ongoing exploration of opportunities for social enterprise including high quality experiences for visitors and residents;
- continued evolution and development of the foundational backdrop for citizen and visitor experiences and the region's small businesses, contributing to the quality of life in the Meewasin Valley and in Saskatoon; and
- providing the City of Saskatoon and its residents with the Meewasin advantage delivered by a small and mighty team, that in 2022-2023 included:
 - 88 volunteer events providing more than 12,000 volunteer hours supporting core activities and the valley clean-up program;
 - planting 7,072 native plants (22,382 trees/shrubs, 38,844 plugs, 6,073 aquatics over the last 10 years);
 - 450 metres of Meewasin Trail upgraded;
 - 18,042 visits to Beaver Creek Conservation Area;
 - 12,154 visits to the Meewasin Skating Rink;
 - 2.32 million visits to the Meewasin Trail;
 - 6 unique tourism experiences, which included 29 events and 400 guests; and
 - 133 educational programs with 3,430 participants.

We again, respectfully request that the recommendation to freeze the CPI increases to funding for Meewasin for the 2024 and 2025 budget years be reconsidered so that we can continue to work together to enhance the quality of life for all residents and visitors to this beautiful city.

Sincerely,



Andrea Lafond