
CITY OF KELOWNA

MEMORANDUM

Date: February 23, 2006
File No.: 0230-20
To: City Manager
From: Director of Planning and Corporate Services
Subject: WHO Age-Friendly Urban Community Project

RECOMMENDATION:

THAT the City of Kelowna not submit an application to participate in a World Health Organization community project that would help develop age-friendly city indicators and guidelines.

BACKGROUND

During the 'open session' portion of the morning Regular Meeting held Monday, February 20, 2006, Council briefly discussed a Province of British Columbia invitation for the City of Kelowna to submit an application to participate in a World Health Organization community project to develop age-friendly city indicators and guidelines. The item was referred to Planning and Corporate Services for consideration and reporting back with a recommendation for Council to consider on February 27, 2006.

DISCUSSION

It is an honour to have been invited to participate in the above-noted international project.

The "ageing" of Kelowna's population profile is years ahead of most Canadian cities. We are starting to encounter related issues/challenges that other communities will not face for 5-10 years. As such, Kelowna would probably be considered a good candidate for a "case study".

Participating in the WHO project could enhance knowledge of local environmental and social barriers to active aging. Participating would likely also build networks with other communities facing similar challenges. Such contacts might prove useful.

The noted benefits do not, however, come without costs -- both some direct costs resulting from travel/accommodation expenses as well as more significant indirect costs resulting from staff time to be devoted to the project.

The bulk of the project work would have to be completed over six months (Spring - Fall 2006). Staffing resources within the Policy/Research/Strategic Planning section are more than fully committed for the duration of 2006. Already, several projects initially expected to be completed by year-end, have, as a result of new priorities, been delayed to 2007. Taking on the WHO project would introduce further delays.

When considering the merits of tackling projects not currently on the work program, it is worth assessing how such projects relate to the City's Strategic Plan. The Strategic Plan includes an action item which directs the City to *"develop or support programs that address the needs and engage the energies of seniors"*. This action is to be pursued by the Recreation, Parks and Cultural Services Department. The emphasis of the Strategic Plan, as it relates to the needs of seniors, appears to be on *programs* – not on indicators and guidelines as would be addressed by the WHO project. Tackling this project would therefore mean a departure not just from the 2006 work program, but also from the longer-term work program identified in the Strategic Plan.

Background material from the Province suggests that "partner cities in particular will benefit" from participating in the WHO project. It is not clear how, apart from doing the research and having that research *partially* funded by the Ministry of Health, the City would benefit. The Province has not indicated how much assistance would be available to fund the required focus group research and pilot studies. The Province expects the City to commit to sending at least one representative to each of two meetings – one to be held in Vancouver and one to be held elsewhere (likely Europe). The Province notes that the City would be responsible for some, if not all, travel costs. With accommodation and travel expenses, the City may be expected to contribute up to \$4000 – in addition to the costs of staff time.

Providing an age-friendly community is important and initiatives are underway in Kelowna that are consistent with that objective. It would be wonderful for Kelowna to be acknowledged for those initiatives. The research to be undertaken for this project will no doubt be useful, but it is not clear how the benefits accruing to Kelowna would be enhanced through participation as a "partner community".

When taking into account City priorities as expressed in the Strategic Plan, current project commitments, and participation costs, it is suggested that the benefits of participating in this project do not outweigh the costs.

Signe K. Bagh, MCIP
Manager
Policy, Research, and Strategic Planning

Approved for inclusion
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