



May 9, 2018

His Worship Naheed Nenshi and Members of Council  
The City of Calgary  
Office of the Mayor and Office of the Councillors  
P.O. Box 2100, Station "M"  
Calgary, AB T2P 2M5

Dear Mayor Nenshi and Members of Council:

**RE: Community Representation Framework (CRF) Engagement Process Feedback**

The Federation of Calgary Communities (The Federation) serves a diverse group of small community based not-for-profit organizations in Calgary, with our primary and founding members being community associations (CAs). As you know, there are 151 CAs in our city working every day to improve neighbourhood life in Calgary. Along with these vital community groups, we make up the largest collective volunteer movement in Calgary, with more than 20,000 volunteers strong. Our other 70 members include a variety of community based not-for-profits ranging from children, youth and senior serving organizations, to crime prevention and safety organizations, recreational organizations, and many more.

One of our roles is to support CAs in learning about, navigating and contributing to the urban planning process. This is a city building activity that for more than four decades involves thousands of community volunteers per year. On April 16, 2018, CRF launched a survey to our CAs. As a result, The Board of Directors for the Federation has been updated on the CRF Engagement Process and the feedback received from many of our members. As a recognized voice for community, we want to inform you that we are neither comfortable nor satisfied with the engagement process to date, nor the general tone and direction of the CRF. Specifically:

- Since the inception of CRF, we, through our Executive Director Leslie Evans, have been advocating to CRF to communicate with our communities and be transparent and respectful around the value of CAs in the planning process. CRF employees heard from our Urban Planning Committee in January that a thoughtful, robust and thorough engagement strategy would be needed to help CAs understand and benefit from the proposed model. Despite the Federation's advocacy on this, the CRF's engagement process to date has failed to listen to or respect a group that has tirelessly served this city.

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- Since the launch of the CRF survey, we have heard from more than 50 of our members who feel frustrated by the lack of transparency with the process and wonder why they haven't been consulted sooner. This feedback is concerning since the CRF Task Force, according to excerpts from The City of Calgary web site, is committed to transparency in that "all discussions will be transparent and open to sharing with the broader community".
- Because CRF committee minutes were embargoed and steering committee members were under strict confidentiality rules, the survey was the CAs first introduction to CRF and the proposed engagement approach. The backgrounder attached was vague and left more questions than answers. As a result, community volunteers were skeptical as they didn't clearly understand what was being asked, the motivations behind the concept being presented, nor the implications of their answers.
- Our members shared concerns over the survey quality, design and distribution all of which were felt to be "manipulative, insulting, unethical and inconsistent".
- One of the most controversial aspects of the survey they pointed out was the initial one-week timeline which is not reflective of CA committee processes or realities. The Boards of CAs are elected by local residents to act on behalf of their best interests, and they consult, engage and collaborate accordingly, so a very tight timeline made assisting with this engagement virtually impossible.
- Community questions to CRF staff around timeline and "who" was to answer the survey resulted in more questions and were in blatant disregard to community best practice. This is, for our communities, an indication that CRF, from the beginning, has not understood the process or practices of CAs, nor bothered to spend the time to find out.
- The conclusion most community volunteers vocalized was that the district model feels like a "done deal", the survey is an engagement "check box" and The City doesn't care to understand or recognize their "true contribution and value".

CAs in Calgary are unique to our city and have played a valuable role in building community for more than 70 years. We believe they are true gems and that if we all work together, in an appreciative approach, we can be better together. CA volunteers feel a sense of pride and value in carrying out planning and all tasks and feel a commitment to The City to do their work well.

Therefore, the Federation recommends immediate corrective action, including:

- 1) The CRF process should start with a focus on improving this unique model and not just build a "new" governance structure.
- 2) The approach and tone of CRF, to date, has resulted in a lost opportunity to build relationships and improve on our current practices. We trust as this work moves forward more emphasis and value will be placed on the community volunteers who work tirelessly to make Calgary a city of great neighbourhoods.

- 3) As was requested earlier this year by our Urban Planning Committee and continually at CRF meetings, a much more thoughtful, robust and thorough engagement strategy is needed to help CAs understand and benefit from the proposed model. The Federation continues to offer to assist with developing a revised engagement process re-design.
- 4) Further, we continue to support and direct Leslie, our Executive Director, to be the voice for the Federation and community associations on CRF and expect that her voice will be heard, valued and respected. This is in alignment with CRF's commitment to ensure "contributions from all Task Force members are valued and respected and will be communicated in a transparent and respectful manner" and "that all opinions are important and should be taken into consideration".

In closing, we look forward to how our concerns will be addressed and how our recommendations will be incorporated into this process. This is our work, we are proud of it, and it is important to our members.

Sincerely,



Terry Koch  
President  
(On behalf of the Board of Directors)

(cc. Katie Black, Matthias Tita, David Couroux, Board members of the Federation of Calgary Communities, Community Association Presidents)