



socialplanningcouncil
of Sudbury

conseil de planification sociale
de Sudbury

May 31, 2013

Councillor Terry Kett, Chair
All members of the Budget Committee

Sent via email

Dear Council

I want to bring to your attention at budget time the potential loss of an important community service – the Community Database housed at www.greatersudburyinfo.ca and supported by the Social Planning Council of Sudbury.

With the dismantling of the mysudbury project we are at risk of losing the Community Resource Directory. The Directory was created online over 10 years ago with funds provided by the Ministry of Citizenship, Culture and Immigration. It was created in response to the gap in our community for easy access to a comprehensive data base of community services. In many communities this service is provided by an Information & Referral service (often funded by the United Way and other community partners) which we didn't have in CGS in the early part of 2000. When mysudbury was designed the SPC was approached to integrate the directory into the portal which was intended to be the one stop shop for information. For the many years that mysudbury existed the SPC was supported by the economic development department in order to maintain the directory and make sure the records were up to date.

As you know there were many problems with mysudbury including its technological infrastructure however near the end of the project the community resource directory was migrated to a platform called CIOC which is the industry standard for these types of data bases. The site is now functioning extremely well. With no real budget for marketing we have become a very significant source of information for community residents with 182,000 visits and last year and 189,000 to date this year. Clearly people are coming to greatersudburyinfo to find information and services that they need. There are close to 900 records in the data base and provide information for many human, health, social, leisure and educational services.

The site requires ongoing maintenance to ensure that the data is up to date. Every agency/individual is called on an annual basis to ensure the data is accurate. This often involves several calls and follow up and the work has been provided by 1FTE working at the SPC. The amount of funding lost was \$40,000. In the interim the Community Development department has been supportive in helping us keep the site alive until budget time. I believe that there are areas that the city could reduce internal resources if the site was supported and was integrated into departments. For example most of the activities/connections in the Leisure Guide which is produced bi-annually are included at greatersudburyinfo. There



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would no longer be a requirement for city staff to keep these records updated – they could be provided by the SPC. The Children's Service Sector has integrated 181 records from the site into their new Best Start website – all of which get updated by the SPC. The Library has inquired in regards to more streamlined information in regards to human services especially concerning seniors and new comers – this information is readily available in the site and could be easily accessed by library staff as opposed to spending time looking for it elsewhere.

There have been questions raised in regards to the potential for duplication via this site. It is suggested that the information is available in other places. While this may be true – organizations for the most part have websites, the City website, google etc. – none of these places brings all of the information together and when you don't know what you are looking for you don't know where to start.

Providing information to citizens should be a key function in a community. A web based information service is an economical way to make that happen. A non profit organization providing this service is a relatively inexpensive way to ensure it happens. Please take a few minutes to visit the site and explore for yourselves. Obviously I am available for further inquiries. The SPC requires that the \$40,000 be maintained. This covers the cost of the staff, the licence and the web hosting.

Sincerely

Janet Gasparini
Executive Director

p.s. good luck on the budget – I know how hard this work is!