

Advancing Winnipeg as a Human Rights City

January 2025 Café Conversation Event
Preliminary Report

A Report of the Human Rights Committee of Council
February 14, 2025



Summary of What We Heard on January 14TH 2025 event

On January 14, 2025, the Human Rights Committee of Council hosted a Café Conversation in the Mayor's Foyer at City Hall, bringing together community voices to discuss human rights priorities for Winnipeg. This event provided an opportunity for residents, advocates, and stakeholders to share perspectives on advancing equity, diversity, accessibility, and human rights within the city.

The overarching theme of the discussion was positioning Winnipeg as a Human Rights City—a designation participants felt should be formalized and amplified to reflect and strengthen the city's commitment to human rights.

Participants highlighted the need to clarify the municipal framework for human rights, including how outcomes are monitored and assessed. There was also a strong call for greater public awareness of the Human Rights Committee — its role, responsibilities, and impact. Suggestions included expanding public education initiatives, fostering dialogue, and developing a Human Rights Charter to guide city policies and signal Winnipeg's leadership on human rights at both national and international levels.

This report summarizes the key themes and insights shared during the discussion.

About the Human Rights Committee of Council

The Human Rights Committee of Council advises the Mayor and City Council on human rights, equity, diversity, peace, accessibility, and disability-related issues. It provides a public perspective on these matters, assesses their impact on the community and civic operations, and ensures alignment with existing legislation.

The committee collaborates with City departments and community organizations to conduct outreach, share policies, and address concerns through meetings, public forums, and workshops. It also monitors the implementation of policies related to services, appointments, and hiring practices within the City of Winnipeg. Additionally, it produces an annual report and financial review detailing its activities and initiatives. (See Terms of Reference)



Picture of the Broadway Centennial Fountain in Winnipeg that pays tribute to Shoal Lake 40 First Nation, the source of Winnipeg's drinking water. The construction of the aqueduct flooded Shoal Lake 40 and cut it off from the mainland.

Approaches to Advancing Human Rights Work & How the Human Rights Committee of Council Works

The overwhelming majority of recommendations from the café conversation emphasized and reflected a collective call for a more proactive, engaged, and community-driven approach to human rights in Winnipeg. At the same time, participants asked a great deal of questions on how the human rights committee should or could work. Some answers can be found in the terms of reference, others with a more consistent approach to advancing human rights work.

Participants in the Café Conversation expressed a strong desire for the Human Rights Committee to be more engaged in ongoing, meaningful dialogue with communities across Winnipeg. Ensuring that municipal human rights committee of council initiatives, monitoring, engagement, activities and practices align with the lived experiences and needs of all residents.

Collaboration and Partnerships

Participants emphasized collaboration with local organizations serving equity deserving groups in advocacy, including national and international entities or arms of these groups. Some other local organizations were specifically mentioned, including Harvest Manitoba, Immigration Partnership Winnipeg, Manitoba Association of Senior Communities, Manitoba Possible, Manitoba Association Newcomer and Settlement to name a few. In addition to council structures, Winnipeg Food Council, Climate Action and Resilience Committee, Welcoming Winnipeg Committee, and Winnipeg Committee for Safety. Strengthening partnerships between and amongst Council, other citizen committees of council, with Human Rights Committee were priorities as were the standing policy committees themselves.

Expanding Community Dialogue

The Café Convo Series was identified as an effective tool for continued discussions, and participants emphasized the need for far more opportunities for engagement and an engagement plan that bring people together in accessible and inclusive settings on a more regular and reliable basis. There was a strong emphasis on informal environments.

Participants highlighted the importance of:

- Strengthening specific outreach to ethno-cultural communities by meeting them in their own spaces and ensuring council representatives are involved in hands-on community work.
- Creating more opportunities for dialogue with diverse communities.
- Bringing conversations to where people are, rather than expecting communities to come to City Hall.

Engagement with Elected Officials

Holding community meetings with elected officials to discuss human rights issues in local contexts was another priority. Specifically, encouraging City Councillors to participate in direct outreach and witness community-led initiatives firsthand

Recognizing Contributions to Human Rights

Establishing a Human Rights Citizen Award to celebrate individuals or organizations advancing equity and justice in Winnipeg.

Policy and Budget Alignment

- Making human rights-focused reports, municipal budget information, and related data publicly available.
- Developing a Human Rights Impact Assessment (HRIA) Tool to evaluate city policies, ensuring they align with human rights principles.
- Structuring the Human Rights Budget of the City of Winnipeg to support initiatives that have a direct impact.

City and Council Led Initiatives, and the Referral Mechanisms 1

Participants considered momentum that was provided on human rights when Council referred strategies and policy work to them such as the Newcomer Welcome and Inclusion Policy. As part of the Committee's priorities participants considered the need to establish and communicate an effective referral process, ensuring that human rights concerns brought forward by Council, or Departments, and the community at-large can be meaningfully addressed.

To this end, participants highlighted the necessity of outlining a clear process for referrals to the Human Rights Committee. In addition, to establishing a process for raising human rights issues at the city level discussions also reinforced the need for other city mechanisms dedicated to human rights, including:

- Monitoring progress
- Enhancing equity, diversity, and access programs and diversifying the municipal workforce
- Strengthening relationships with key departments and equity deserving groups (for example, emergency services coordination with the Deaf community).

Key Human Rights Topics Discussed to be considered in the workplan

The Café Conversation identified a range of human rights issues and topics that require attention at the municipal level. Participants highlighted both systemic barriers and opportunities for progress, emphasizing the need for community-driven initiatives, stronger civic engagement, and proactive measures to protect and promote human rights for all residents.

The following topics emerged as key priorities:

Accessibility in City Places and Spaces

Ensuring that all public spaces are accessible remains a critical issue.

Gender-Based Violence

Discussions focused on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, and Two-Spirit implementation and support for the implementation committee. Strengthening the work and considering joint work with the Winnipeg Committee for Safety, and aligning with the UN Safe Cities Network to take more collective action to eliminate gender-based violence in Winnipeg and beyond.

Municipal Voting Rights

There was strong support for expanding voting rights to permanent residents in municipal elections, ensuring greater democratic participation and representation in local governance. Participants also discussed issues pertaining to democratic access and learning about municipalities, city governance, consultation and government participation.

Decolonizing Human Rights

A recurring theme was the need to decolonize the approach to human rights by centering Indigenous perspectives (for instance, decolonizing water governance and infrastructure) recognizing the impacts of colonialism, and reconciliation efforts that include Indigenous ecologies and an ethic of greater connection.

Homelessness and Housing Insecurity

Strategies to deconstruct homelessness included addressing employment and food insecurity, ensuring access to safe and affordable housing, and strengthening support networks.

Newcomer and Immigration Initiatives

Community partners, subject matter experts, and funding partners proposed very specific human rights work with respect to information campaigns on public safety topics, such as emergency management, water safety and drowning prevention, road safety, fire prevention, and extreme cold weather preparedness and more.

2SLGBTQIA+ Inclusion

Participants emphasized the need for increased representation, anti-discrimination work, and inclusive city services that affirm and support 2SLGBTQIA+ residents.

Anti-Racism Initiatives

Ideas included strengthening partnerships with ethno-cultural groups, launching public education on governance, and addressing the rise in hate incidents through proactive community engagement.

Police and Community Relations and Perspectives

A focus on improving relationships between the police, and communities was discussed, with emphasis on a joint meeting to address hate crimes

Social Determinants of Health

There was discussion on how the Peg City Indicators could be used to track disparities in health outcomes and address systemic barriers affecting marginalized communities.

Access Without Fear

Participants stressed the need for policies ensuring that all residents, regardless of immigration status, can access essential services without fear of discrimination or deportation.

Conclusion & Next Steps

The January 14, 2025, Café Conversation reaffirmed Winnipeg's commitment to becoming a Human Rights City and highlighted the need for initiatives that protect and promote human rights at the municipal level. The insights gathered from this discussion will help guide and advance work and next steps of the Human Rights Committee of Council. Meetings are being arranged with the Human Rights Committee and subcommittees to develop action items and steps towards a workplan and timeline.

This document will be used to engage Mayor and Council, civil society groups, and alumni of the Human Rights Committee of Council for further collaboration and partnerships and potential events all with the objective of producing more human rights outcomes for the City of Winnipeg.

Attachment: HUMAN RIGHTS COMMITTEE OF COUNCIL TERMS OF REFERENCE:

1.0 MANDATE

- 1.1 To provide a public perspective on human rights, equity, diversity, immigration, age-friendly, access and disabilities, and peace-related issues and how associated matters affect the community and civic operations.
- 1.2 To serve as an advisory body to the Mayor and City Council on human rights, equity, diversity, peace, and access and disability related issues and emerging trends as they affect Winnipeg communities, as well as the adherence to and application of existing legislation.
- 1.3 To work co-operatively with existing City Departments and community organizations to carry out community outreach initiatives through regular meetings, public forums and workshops to share city policy on human rights, equity, diversity, peace, age-friendly, access and disability-related issues and convey concerns to City Council.
- 1.4 To produce an annual report and annual finance review that describes the activities that the Committee, and its sub-committees, undertook, supported and participated in for the information and attention of City Council.
- amended by Council September 22, 2022
- 1.5 To monitor the implementation of existing and new policies on services, appointments and hiring procedures at the City of Winnipeg related to topics under the Committee's purview.

Committee members are bound by these Terms of Reference and are accountable to the Mayor and Council of the City of Winnipeg.

2.0 DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- 2.1 To provide knowledgeable and impartial high-level advice to the Mayor and Council in the following areas of human rights, equity, diversity, access, age-friendly, disabilities, immigration, and peace.
- 2.2 To ensure appropriate consultation is taking place between the City, identified stakeholder groups and the community-at-large concerning issues related to human rights, equity, diversity, immigration, peace, age-friendly, access and disabilities.
- 2.3 Members will provide advice on existing and proposed initiatives from the City's Public Service and may bring forward new ideas.

2.4 Related to City Council

- 2.4.1 Review and recommend changes to by-laws, resolution, policies, regulations, and budgets related issues of human rights, equity, diversity, peace, immigration, access, age-friendly and disabilities.
- 2.4.2 Receive referrals from Council or its Committees for review and recommendation.
- 2.4.3 Monitor progress of City Council in implementing recommendations made by the Human Rights Committee.

2.5 Related to City Departments

- 2.5.1 Implement and monitor equity, diversity and access programs, and programs for newcomers.
- 2.5.2 Assist the City of Winnipeg in becoming a leader in human rights, and in diversifying its work force.
- 2.5.3 Monitor progress of City Departments in implementing recommendations made by the Human Rights Committee.

2.6 Related to the Public

- 2.6.1 Act as vocal advocates for human rights locally, nationally and internationally.
- 2.6.2 Work with the Universal Design Steering Committee to ensure that the City of Winnipeg conducts a review of projects and new services through a universal design lens.
- 2.6.3 Advocate actively on issues related to human rights, equity, diversity, peace, immigration, age-friendly, access and disabilities.
- 2.6.4 Assist in address concerns of citizens regarding issues of human rights, equity, diversity, peace, immigration, age-friendly, access and disabilities.
- 2.6.5 Ensure communications and involvement between City and the community on issues of human rights, equity, diversity, peace, immigration, age-friendly access and disabilities.

3.0 QUALIFICATIONS OF MEMBERS

Members of the Committee will be selected on the basis of:

- 3.1 A sound general knowledge of Winnipeg and its human rights, equity, diversity, peace, immigration, age-friendly, access and disability related issues
- 3.2 Demonstrated personal interest and active participation in human rights, equity, diversity, immigration, age-friendly, access and disabilities, and/or peace-related issues in the City of Winnipeg.
- 3.3 Work experience, educational, knowledge and professional expertise related to human rights, equity, immigration, diversity, age-friendly, access and disabilities, and/or peace-related issues.
- 3.4 Ability to attend meetings and devote some time between meetings to work on matters before the Committee and its sub-committees

4.0 REPORTING

- 4.1 The Human Rights Committee shall report to Council through the Executive Policy Committee.

5.0 MEMBERSHIP AND ORGANIZATION

- 5.1 Membership of the Human Rights Committee shall be comprised of the Mayor, or designate, as Chair, and one City Councillor and a minimum of eight (8) members and a maximum of twelve (12) all to be appointed by Commissions.
- 5.2 Members shall participate as independent members, not as a representative of another body of which they may be a member or employee.
- 5.3 Human Rights Committee members shall be appointed for two-year terms, are limited to three (3) terms, and will be appointed or re-appointed each year in the fall, the timing to be aligned each year with reconstitution of the Standing Committees of Council.
- 5.4 Human Rights Committee members will not receive remuneration for their involvement in Human Rights Committee meetings or activities.
- 5.5 The Committee may create sub-committees or working groups as it deems necessary. These sub-committees or working groups may invite citizens-at-large to participate. Two permanent sub-committees will be the Access and Inclusion Sub-Committee and the Equity and Diversity Sub-Committee, with others to be created by the Committee as it chooses. These sub-committees will also require terms of reference which guide their work.

- amended by Council September 22, 2022

5.6 Members may resign at any time upon written notice to the Mayor.

- 5.7 A member who does not attend three (3) consecutive meetings without an approved leave of absence by the Committee shall be deemed to have resigned.

6.0 MEETINGS

- 6.1 Meetings of the Human Rights Committee will be held at the call of the Chair(s), at least six (6) times annually.
- 6.2 A quorum is a majority of members appointed to the committee.
- 6.3 Meetings are only to be held at locations accessible to members and guests with disabilities.
- 6.4 Information for meetings shall be available four (4) working days in advance of the meeting in accessible formats as required by members of the Committee.
- 6.5 The Human Rights Committee may from time to time invite resource people to attend and participate in a meeting including, as required, making presentations to the Committee.

7.0 VOTING

- 7.1 All members have a vote at each meeting.

7.2 A tie vote deems that a motion or decision is defeated.

- 7.3 A member who may be in a conflict of interest situation is required to declare such conflict and abstain from voting and not participate in the discussion of that issue.

8.0 CITY STAFF LIAISON AND SUPPORT SERVICES

- 8.1 The City of Winnipeg will provide administrative, research and clerical support to the Committee as required.
- 8.2 An ex-officio non-voting representative from the City of Winnipeg, assigned by the CAO, will attend all meetings of the Human Rights Committee and will provide support to develop an action plan with involvement from existing community organizations to ensure their needs and interests are reflected and help to implement said action plan.
- 8.3 The City Clerk shall assign a clerk to the Human Rights Committee to assist in procedural matters, committee agendas, and committee minutes.

9.0 BUDGET

- 9.1 The budget for the Committee will be approved by Council through the annual budget process.
- 9.2 The annual budget is prepared by the Coordinator, approved by the Committee and submitted to City Council for approval.
- amended by Council September 22, 2022
- 9.3 Budget expenditures shall be utilized on activities which implement and support the Committee's mandate detailed in Section 1 and/or on committee-approved strategic planning initiatives.
- amended by Council September 22, 2022
- 9.4 Budget expenditures of \$1,000.00 and under may be approved under the authority of the Committee Coordinator in consultation with the Committee Chair.
- amended by Council September 22, 2022
- 9.5 Budget expenditures in excess of \$1,000.00 shall be endorsed by vote of the committee at a regularly-scheduled or a special meeting. In situations of timing constraints, expenditures in excess of \$1,000.00 may be endorsed by committee members in principle and ratified at the next meeting of the Human Rights Committee of Council.
- amended by Council September 22, 2022
- 9.6 The Coordinator shall submit a list of expenditures accrued in the form of a budget update for the committee's information.
- amended by Council September 22, 2022

10.0 AMENDMENTS

- 10.1 The Committee shall review these terms of reference annually and may propose amendments to the Executive Policy Committee for submission to Council for approval.

Attachment: Referrals to the Human Rights Committee of Council

The terms of reference for the Human Rights Committee of Council considers referrals from Council and members of the public. Specifically,

- Related to City Council: 2.4.2 Receive referrals from Council or its Committees for review and recommendation.
- Related to the Public: 2.6.4 Assist in addressing concerns of citizens regarding issues of human rights, equity, diversity, peace, immigration, age-friendly, access and disabilities.

This form has been developed to support referrals to the Human Rights Committee of Council for their review, and or recommendations.

Please provide your full name: _____

Contact Information (including email, daytime phone number) _____

Date of referral (day/month/year) _____

Please identify the human rights matter to be referred to the Human Rights Committee of Council (Provide a brief description (one or two sentences) of the matter you are referring (e.g., report or issue):

Supporting Documents (Attach any relevant documents, reports, or supplementary materials. Provide a brief detailed list of the documents that will accompany your referral)

Identify the Relevant Department or Committee of Council

Select the relevant committee(s):

- ☐ **Community Services**
- ☐ **Finance and Economic Development**
- ☐ **Public Works**
- ☐ **Property & Development**
- ☐ **Water, Waste, and Environment**
- ☐ **Executive Policy Committee (EPC)**
- ☐ **Other** _____

Human Rights Context and Background History (Provide relevant context or background to help the HRCC understand the issue related to human rights. For instance, human rights background, international human rights law, core treaties) etc.

Desired Outcome or other notes:

Participants considered momentum that was provided on human rights when Council referred strategies and policy work to them such as the Newcomer Welcome and Inclusion Policy. As part of the Committee's priorities participants considered the need to establish and communicate an effective referral process, ensuring that human rights concerns brought forward by Council, or Departments, and the community at-large can be meaningfully addressed.

To this end, participants highlighted the necessity of outlining a clear process for referrals to the Human Rights Committee. In addition, to establishing a process for raising human rights issues at the city level discussions also reinforced the need for other city mechanisms dedicated to human rights, including:

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- Strengthening relationships with key departments and equity deserving groups (for example, emergency services coordination with the Deaf community).