



Steering Committee Members Wanted for City's Participatory Budgeting Initiative

Date: Tuesday, January 7, 2020

For Immediate Release

VICTORIA, BC – Interested in helping your community decide how to invest a portion of the City's budget? The City of Victoria is seeking 15 volunteers to serve on the 2020 Participatory Budgeting Steering Committee.

The Inter-Cultural Association of Greater Victoria will host this year's Participatory Budgeting Steering Committee, which will focus on empowering the community to allocate up to \$50,000 in funding for projects that benefit newcomers in the City of Victoria.

"When you give community members the opportunity to directly decide how to invest a portion of the City budget great things happen," said Victoria Mayor Lisa Helps. "This year we're turning our attention, energy and resources to Newcomers. We look forward to the creative ideas people put forward to make life better for those getting a new start in our community."

Participatory budgeting is an innovative, democratic process that was first developed in Brazil in 1989. It is now practiced in more than 3,000 cities around the world. The initiative began in Victoria in 2017 with a successful pilot project. In 2019, the City committed to three more years of funding, starting with a focus on youth, then newcomers this year, and on neighbourhood spaces in 2021.

The Participatory Budgeting Steering Committee develops and oversees the community-led budgeting process to engage and work with community members to develop ideas and proposals. Community voting determines the top projects for funding.

"Victoria is such a multi-cultural and engaged city, and it's time to put our inspiring diversity, creativity and strength to good use," said Robin McGeough, Settlement Youth Worker with the Inter-Cultural Association of Greater Victoria. "The Steering Committee will play an integral part in this process, with opportunities to engage our wider community through this innovative democratic process. There are so many ways to get involved – from encouraging people to submit ideas to helping promote the vote. This is an exciting and incredibly unique way to get to know your community."

In total, 11 community-led projects have received \$110,000 in City of Victoria Participatory Budgeting funding, including a program to prevent youth homelessness, a music and poetry open mic for youth mental health awareness, a youth-focused parenting program, the Next Steps Employment Program run through Our Place, a pop-up native bee apiary in the Yates Street Community Garden and a learning garden at the Greater Victoria Public Library's downtown branch.

Steering Committee applications are available at victoria.ca/pb and can be submitted until Friday, Feb. 7. Drop in to learn more at a "Meet and Greet Information Session," Thursday, Jan. 30 from 4:30 p.m. – 6 p.m. hosted at the ICA Inter-Cultural Association, 930 Balmoral Road (at Quadra Street, in the lower level of the First Metropolitan United Church).

The Participatory Budgeting process thrives on the diverse representation of Victorians. We strongly encourage Steering Committee applications from individuals who have diverse lived experiences, particularly from newcomer communities.

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