

From: Heenal Rajani

Sent: Tuesday, June 25, 2024 9:11 AM

To: Woolsey, Heather

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Subject: [EXTERNAL] Letter to the SORWG committee re Proposed Changes to the NDM & London Community Grants programs

Dear Ms. Woolsey, Mayor, and Councillors

I am writing to express my deep concerns regarding the proposed suspension of the London Community Grants and the Neighbourhood Decision Making (NDM) grants. As a community member and representative of Reimagine Co and of the Institute for Community Sustainability, I strongly oppose this proposal and urge the committee to reject it.

While I will not be available to attend the meeting tomorrow to speak in person, I humbly invite you to hear my further thoughts on the matter

here: <https://www.facebook.com/heenalr/videos/954764383003292>

Reimagine Co exists today because of the NDM. The \$8,000 grant we received kickstarted our work and enabled us to turn our vision into reality. Many many London groups can share similar stories. Furthermore, the capital grant we received enabled us to renovate our community event space, which has been a tremendous benefit not only for us but for dozens of other organizations in our community. Suspending these grants would be a significant setback for many local nonprofits that rely on them for essential projects and services.

These grants encourage community involvement and foster a sense of ownership and pride among residents. Reducing or eliminating these opportunities would discourage civic engagement at a time when it is needed most. The NDM grants, in particular, have empowered residents to directly participate in improving their neighborhoods, creating a stronger, more connected community.

The funds provided by these grants often help nonprofits leverage additional funding from other sources. In the post-COVID era, with donations dwindling, these grants are more critical than ever. They serve as a catalyst for further investment and support, amplifying the impact of each dollar spent by the city.

The argument against funding park benches, basketball courts, and other amenities through NDM overlooks their importance as community assets and the importance of local democracy as a public good in its own right. These amenities promote social interaction, physical activity, and overall well-being. Investing in such infrastructure is essential for maintaining a high quality of life in our city.

While I support a review of the grants process to ensure efficiency and effectiveness, pausing the program is not the solution. Instead, the review should consider expanding these grants to better meet the growing needs of our community. We should be looking at increasing the funding tenfold, not reducing or scrapping it.

The London Community Grants and NDM programs are vital to the fabric of our community. They support essential services, enhance public spaces, and foster a sense of community and participation. I urge the committee to reject the proposal to suspend these grants and instead focus on enhancing and expanding them to better serve our community.

Thank you for considering my letter. I trust that the committee will recognize the importance of these grants and the positive impact they have on our city.

Yours sincerely,

Heenal Rajani