

REQUEST FOR DECISION

Subject: 2023 Community Conversations Annual Report
From: Bill Given, Chief Administrative Officer
Prepared by: Lisa Riddell, Community Development Manager
Reviewed by: Christopher Read, Director of Community Development
Emma Acorn, Legislative Services Manager
Date: January 9, 2024



Recommendation:

That Committee receive the Community Conversations Annual Report for January to December 2023 for information.

Options:

That Committee direct Administration to bring forward additional information on any items of interest in the Community Conversations report to a future Committee meeting.

Background:

On September 21, 2021 Council approved the [Community Conversations Policy \(A-105\)](#) which outlines Council's commitment to meaningful resident engagement to ensure that municipal services and programs remain responsive to changing community needs. In February 2023, a revised Policy A-105 was adopted by Council, directing Administration to narrow the scope of conversations to focus on the life-stage focused conversations.

From January to December 2023, 37 life-stage focused Community Conversations took place (4 in January, 3 in every other month). In February of 2023, the Early Childhood and the School Age Conversation participants wanted to try combining their previously separated conversations. So, instead of two separate 1-hr conversations per month, they took part in one, 1.5hour conversation all together each month from February onwards.

Here is a breakdown of attendance in 2023 compared to 2022 numbers.

	Year	Breakdown by quarter and type of participant								
		Jan. to March 2023			April to June 2023			Sept. to Nov. 2023		
		MOJ	Non MOJ	Total	MOJ	Non MOJ	Total	MOJ	Non MOJ	Total
Adults	2022	16	23	39	11	22	33	8	15	23
	2023	9	17	26	10	20	30	9	23	32
Seniors	2022	13	14	27	11	12	23	5	16	21
	2023	8	24	32	14	25	39	10	25	35
Early Childhood & School Age	2022									
	2023	17	13	30	16	11	27	16	12	28

**Municipal attendance at the Early Childhood & School Age Conversation is high because the Municipality of Jasper offers many services for this age group: daycare, out of school care, 3 x Outreach Workers, 1 x Settlement Worker.*

Here is a list of organizations/groups who have signed up to participate in Community Conversations. Those in *italics* attend regularly (2/3 of the time). The rest attend periodically (3 times per year):

- *Alberta Health Services - Addictions and Mental Health*
- Alberta Health Services - Homecare
- Alberta Health Services - Physical Therapy
- *Alberta Health Services - Public Health*
- *Alpine Summit Seniors' Lodge*
- *CN Wellness Committee*
- *Community Development*
- *Community Futures West Yellowhead*
- *Community Outreach Services*
- *Ecole Jasper Elementary School*
- *Ecole Desrochers*
- *Friends of Jasper National Park*
- *Grande Yellowhead Public School Division*
- Government of Alberta - Alberta Supports
- Hinton Friendship Centre
- *Hinton Victim Services*
- *Jasper Activity Centre*
- *Jasper Artist's Guild*
- *Jasper Aquatic Centre*
- *Jasper Community Habitat for The Arts*
- *Jasper Employment Centre*
- *Jasper Library*
- Jasper Minor Sports
- *Jasper Museum*
- Jasper Real Estate
- *Jasper Seniors' Society*
- Jasper Seniors' Housing Society
- Jasper Tour Company
- Mens' Shed Group
- Mettra Pharmacy
- Mountain Makers
- *Municipal Council*
- *Municipal Operations Department*
- Parks Canada - Wellness Committee
- Parks Canada - Indigenous Relations
- Pine Grove Manor
- *Pursuit Jasper Banff Collection*
- Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) - Jasper Detachment
- *Settlement Services*
- *Tourism Jasper*
- Uplift Mural Festival
- Yellowhead Emergency Shelter for Women

Here is a list of organizations Community Development hopes to increase participation from in 2024:

- Fairmont Jasper Park Lodge
- Local Small Businesses
- Individuals
- Via Rail/Rocky Mountaineer
- Jasper Park Chamber of Commerce
- Jasper Crisis Team Society
- Supporting increased attendance from periodic attendees

Discussion:

At Community Conversations, participants identify the changing needs of residents as well as opportunities to take action in response to those needs. A review of all trends and opportunities identified across all Community Conversations throughout 2023 reveals a few thematic areas under which the majority of trends and opportunities identified could be grouped. These have remained similar to 2022 but not exactly the same. In random order:

- **Diversity, Inclusion and Connection:** Organizations continue to see elevated levels of participation in programming, events and initiatives that bring people together – especially those with a diversity, cultural, inclusive theme. The desire for in-person connection has never been higher.

- **Internet & Technology:** A lack of Internet access and low digital literacy can create barriers for folks to access supports, systems, coursework and processes that have largely shifted to on-line since the pandemic. Woven into this same theme is the increased time in front of screens for many children and youth. The effect of social media influencers on youth has been noted as well with reports of discriminatory or offensive behaviour towards others.
- **Mental Health:** There are more complex mental health situations arising for all ages as we see the impact of years of isolation associated with the pandemic and a steady influx of newcomers coming to Jasper to work in the tourism economy.
- **Housing:** Limited access to affordable, stable housing continues to cause stress for Jasperites across all ages. Seniors are looking to downsize, families need adequate housing, staff need stable accommodation to bridge them between seasonal work. Unpredictable rent increases are still causing significant stress. Additionally, some residents live in precarious housing tied to unstable employment.
- **Financial Stress:** Residents of all ages continue to grapple with rising cost of groceries, rent and utilities. This is evident with prolonged increase in requests for relief funding, use of the food bank, food recovery etc.
- **Crisis Response:** The need for crisis response services including one-on-one support as well as financial relief, specifically for folks involved in non-criminal trauma remains high. COS also supports a steady stream of folks coming through town who are homeless and those needs remain consistent.
- **Transportation:** The new transit system has been well received by many for which transportation was previously a barrier.

Participants from Community Conversations were surveyed in November 2023.

- 89% say Community Conversations is a valuable use of their time.
- 89% feel more connected to what's going on in town and the services available through participating in Community Conversations.
- 79% say Community Conversations results in more collaboration between the Municipality and external groups or individuals in the community.
- 84% agree Community Conversations is an effective way to document the changing priorities of residents and then report that information to municipal Council.
- 79% have told a friend about Community Conversations.

Several groups have taken action in response to social priorities raised at Community Conversations. In 2023, there were a variety of actions taken by several participants (both municipal and non-municipal). Here are some of those actions, activities or initiatives:

- **Jasper Employment and Education Centre** launched an on-line resume board for older adults looking for part time work. This initiative came out of community conversations about supporting older adults.
- **Jasper Municipal Library** started a Tween Takeover program for ages 8-11 after a gap in programming for that age group was raised at Community Conversations.
- **Jasper Municipal Council** passed a resolution at Alberta Municipalities advocating for the needs of vulnerable tenants after the rent increases around town came up at Community Conversations.

- **Alberta Health Services** supported Community Outreach Services' proposal to trial a social prescribing for older adults program in Jasper after the opportunity came up at a Community Conversation.
- **Men's Shed Group** mobilized and started making their efforts known after participants from Community Conversations urged the group to share their goals.
- **CN** started connecting their staff with key resources (like the Community Guide, Community Dinners and Santas Anonymous) in Jasper after attending a Community Conversation.
- **OSI-Can**, which offers support to first responders, was able to connect to the Jasper Crisis Team and formalize a partnership through them to offer support locally after attending Community Conversations.

Relevant Legislation:

- [Policy A-105: Community Conversations Policy](#)

Strategic Relevance:

- Communicate and engage with residents.
- Welcome the expertise, innovation, creativity and commitment of community members, groups, associations and businesses.
- Entrust our staff to develop healthy relationships with the people they serve.
- Nurture our most important relationships which are those within our organization

Activities that result from Community Conversations also advance these priorities:

- Take proactive steps to reduce the risk of people becoming vulnerable and respond when they are vulnerable.
- Promote and enhance recreational and cultural opportunities and spaces
- Enable and facilitate events that provide opportunities to increase community connections.
- Embrace our growing diversity.
- Leverage and create opportunities for greater inclusion.

Financial:

The costs to implement the Community Conversations Policy are within the 2023 Operating Budget and included within the draft 2024 Operating Budget.

Attachments:

The notes for each individual conversation can be found on the [Municipality of Jasper website](#).