

History:

The Bonnyville Seniors Citizens Society's mission is to provide affordable recreation, education, socialization, and health and wellness programming for seniors. We believe an active senior is a healthy senior. The Bonnyville Senior Citizens Society owns the 10,000 square foot building and is fully responsible for the operation, upkeep, and maintenance. The building first opened in 1977 with a second stage opening in 1998.

Over the years it has provided many benefits to the community and surrounding area. Due to the COVID Pandemic, our membership numbers had decreased, but they are slowly increasing. We presently have 200 members, and anyone can become a member. Anyone who is 50 and older can become a full member and those under 50 can become an associate member. Membership is \$30 a year and entitles the member to participate in all activities. Members of other senior's organizations from the surrounding area can also participate in our activities, which potentially adds another 200+ citizens.

We are proud of our accomplishments and the way the facility has been managed and funded since its inception. We hope to continue for generations to come. Our Society functions solely on volunteer time from our members and has since its inception. Our current challenge is our aging membership. Over half of our members are now over 70. This means less manpower for our volunteer pool.

Reason for Request:

With our aging membership, we have now had to hire contractors for things like snow removal, light housekeeping, etc. which has increased our monthly expenditures. As well, the insurance coverage for the facility has almost doubled since 2021; the utilities (such as natural gas and power) have almost doubled, and the impact of high inflation has also impacted our expenses. We currently have substantial funds in our account(s); however, these funds are mostly dedicated to specific projects or initiatives, or committed grant money. One fund is from the sale of our bus, which is now solely dedicated to travel expenses for members. The Casino account is limited to what the funds may be spent on by AGCL. We are now only making about \$17,000.00 per casino, once every 4 years, which barely covers 1.5 years of our insurance costs. Two of our term accounts are designated for completion of commitments for grants we have received for facility upgrades. Some of the money is a cushion of approximately 1 – 1.5 years of annual operating expenses. One term is held for emergency expense in case of a significant failure or incident with the facility. We feel we have been financially responsible in running the facility, however, the two years of bills and no income, during Covid has set us back in our financial planning and upkeep. We plan to continue to hold a surplus in the event we have a sudden decrease in rental activities as was experienced with the pandemic. The surplus is also held to cover the current increases in operating costs and/or the sudden loss of revenue; or a major

unexpected repair. We are now diligently trying to catch up, which is one of the main reasons we are applying for this grant.

One interesting statistic is that as of September 30, 2022, more than 725,000 Albertans were over the age of 65 and the seniors' population is projected to reach one million by 2035, by which time the proportion of seniors will be approximately 19 per cent of Alberta's population. This is a good reason to help assist facilities like ours so we can continue to support seniors. If these types of facilities close their doors due to lack of funding, we will lose important places for seniors to congregate for education, socialization and recreation. In this rural area, the majority would be too tired to start all over again. Social isolation and exclusion can be a significant issue for many seniors and can lead to negative health effects including depression and a reduced sense of well-being. Healthy, socially engaged seniors bring many benefits to their communities. They work, volunteer and contribute a wealth of experience to families, neighbourhoods and organizations of all kinds.

Should you approve this operating grant funds application, we feel we would be in a good position to continue serving the local seniors to stay healthy and happy.

Past Grants:

In 2024, we did receive \$250.00 towards activities for Seniors Week 2024.