

# PHILANTHROPY

*Winnipeg Free Press, Philanthropy, Saturday March 27, 2021*

*Credits: Philanthropy Editor, City.Desk@FreePress.MB.Ca • Aaron Epp aaron.epp@gmail.com*

*Photo - Mike Sudoma / Winnipeg Free Press Files • WinnipegFreePress.com*



**Rick Frost joined the Winnipeg Foundation as its fifth CEO in 1997.  
The foundation distributed \$73 million to community organizations in 2020.**

# One Generous City

*Rick Frost, who retires next month after leading the Winnipeg Foundation for nearly a quarter of its 100 years, says one thing has remained constant: people matter*

**W**HEN Rick Frost recalls joining the Winnipeg Foundation as its chief executive officer in 1997, he remembers being struck by Winnipeggers' desire to give.

"I was automatically impressed by the generosity of people," Frost says. "It was immediately obvious from the first week that there were people coming to the foundation willing to make generous gifts to support community projects."

**T**he 73-year-old announced his retirement last May. His last day will be April 26, which is the registered charity's 100th anniversary.

"I think it's appropriate that someone in the next generation take the foundation into its second century," he says.

**F**rost leaves the foundation after its most successful year yet. In 2020, the foundation distributed \$73 million to community organizations, compared to the approximately \$5

million it handed out the year Frost became its fifth executive director.

**T**here have been many milestones over the past 24 years. Under Frost's leadership, the foundation made the largest grant in its history: \$6 million to the Canadian Museum for Human Rights in 2003.

Frost championed several leadership initiatives at the foundation, including the Nourishing Potential and Literacy for Life granting programs and the Growing Active Kids Fund. These endowments, in place to serve the needs of children in Winnipeg, are especially close to his heart.

**T**he Downtown Green Spaces Strategy, launched in 2008, has been another highlight for Frost. The initiative has supported numerous projects, including the revitalization of Old Market Square and the creation of the Saint-Boniface Belvédère walkway along the Red River "I've always felt that the image of our city nationally is created within 10 blocks of Portage and Main," Frost says. "So to me, the vibrancy of downtown is fundamental to our city."

**Celebrating 100 years  
of working together to  
support community**

Learn about our history and centennial celebrations at [wpgfdn.org/100](http://wpgfdn.org/100).

The Transit Employees Community Fund is a lasting legacy to Transit employees and their care for Winnipeg; this photo was taken prior to COVID-19. To their right are William and Elizabeth Alloway, founders of The Winnipeg Foundation.



# Celebrating 100 years of working together to support community

The foundation's vision is a Winnipeg where community life flourishes for everyone.

"I think we all want everyone to have a fair shot at success in the world," Frost says. "Many of (the) equity-based policies that we've put in place over the last 20 years, most recently those related to reconciliation, are all vitally important to the long-term vitality of our city and to the quality of life we all want to enjoy as citizens of Winnipeg."

**P**rior to joining the foundation, Frost spent 25 years working in municipal service, as chief commissioner of the City of Winnipeg (1989-97) and chief administrative officer of the Regional Municipality of Peel in the Toronto area (1978-89).

The eldest of three children born to small business owners in Dundas — which, at the time, was a town of about 15,000 people on the outskirts of Hamilton — Frost's interest in public service started when he was young.

"The mayor went to my church, so I knew about city government from an early age," he recalls. "I certainly remember my first visit to city hall in Grade 8."

**W**hen Frost's time at Winnipeg's city hall ended, former mayor Bill Norrie, then a member of the Winnipeg Foundation's advisory board, recruited Frost to lead the organization.

In addition to being impressed by Winnipeggers' generosity and the sense of camaraderie amongst staff, Frost was immediately struck when he started the job by the impact the foundation could have on the city.

"There were so many opportunities to serve the community," he says. "The Winnipeg Foundation has not a huge amount of money relative to the city budget, but a lot of discretionary money, so the result was you could make things happen fairly easily, and there was a lot of opportunity to do things with people."

**I**f there's a motto or philosophy that has guided Frost's time at the foundation, it's that people matter.

"At the end of the day, it's individual people trying to create an equal playing field for others, recognizing that equity is so important in our society, and trying to establish it and keep it," he says. "We've talked about leadership, we've talked a bit about generosity — in all those things, you come back to the point that people matter."

Frost's desire to make Winnipeg a great place stands out for The Forks CEO Paul Jordan.

"He understands the fact that if you make a city interesting to live in, the economic benefits and the health benefits just follow," Jordan says.

## MANITOBA NEIGHBOURS

In recent years, the Winnipeg Foundation has supported art installations at The Forks focusing on truth and reconciliation. The foundation also sponsored the Centennial River Trail this past winter.

“We’re going to miss Rick,” Jordan says.

Doneta Brotchie, chair of the foundation’s board of directors, is thankful for Frost’s contributions to the charity.

“He is a great leader of people,” she says. “He’s creative, he’s collaborative and he’s deliberate in what he does. He’s very easy to work with because he brings so much to the table.”

“He’s done an excellent job of actually preparing the organization to continue to grow and to be successful, because he’s thought long term and he’s made longer-term decisions,” Brotchie adds.

Frost was pleased when Sky Bridges, currently the chief operating officer at Aboriginal Peoples Television Network,

was announced last December as the foundation’s next CEO.

“I’m very impressed by his knowledge and enthusiasm,” says Frost, who has had numerous conversations with Bridges over the last few months. “I’m very excited by the prospects of his leadership.”

Frost has plans to continue serving the community in a volunteer capacity, but top of mind right now is spending time with Nancy, his wife of more than 50 years, and their children and grandchildren. He also has some summer projects planned at their cottage.

As he reflects on more than 30 years of service in Winnipeg, Frost concludes that his career has been an interesting one.

“I look back on it with many fond memories and I feel very blessed that I had the opportunity,” he says. “It’s a great city with great people, and I’m very excited by the future that we’re all going to share together here.”



The Transit Employees Community Fund is a lasting legacy to Transit employees and their care for Winnipeg. This photo was taken prior to COVID-19. To their right are William and Elizabeth Alloway, founders of the Winnipeg Foundation.