

**PRESENTATION TO CITY OF WINNIPEG EXECUTIVE POLICY COMMITTEE**

**RE: LIBRARY CUTS**

**Mike Davidson, President of CUPE Local 500**

**November 10, 2009**

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Good morning. On August 18<sup>th</sup> of this year we were advised that changes were planned for the cataloging section of the Library service.

Very simply, we think the basis for making the proposed changes is inefficient. We have gone over the Business Plan and generally it seems to lack key information and rely on speculation over substance. There are a number of vague assumptions and few explanations in the document that we think undermines its ability to describe the potential effectiveness of the changes proposed. It is therefore difficult for us to conclude that the changes proposed are good for the library, the members working there or the general public.

First, the document appears to underestimate the nature, volume and complexity of the work involved and done by the Library Support Staff. We could only find a minimal reference to the complexity of the tasks involved and the consequences of adding duties to staff who are already working at maximum levels. As well, there is very little attention paid to the secondary level work done by staff and in particular the demands of entering original material or special requests. The release of the Harry Potter book last year is a specific example of this.

Very importantly, there is no reference in the document to the backlog of work and how it was created, which is a major issue in determining the rationale for a change in cataloguing. The document we received also does not reflect learning from previous efforts to streamline and standardize book processing, nor from current practice. For example, there is no reference to the problems with the Horizon software that is affecting processing now and the system would be more taxed with a reliance on vendor cataloguing software.

Second, the financial analysis in the Business Plan does not demonstrate that the proposed change will cost less while maintaining the quality and volume of service. In fact the document reads more like a “request for proposals” to seek a contractor, than a business plan for addressing workplace change. Note page six, paragraph four which to us reads very much like an RFP.

Specifically, estimates of current cost of service and vendor costs are unjustified. The cost savings of current Vacancy Management measures are not included, and the vendor costs for service and materials are not based on vendor statements or submissions.

For making significant changes in cataloguing, we think there should be a costing of peripheral tasks being performed and how these now contribute to the cost effectiveness of the entire library service. The Plan does not try to cost the quality of service provided by the LSS staff who catalogue and process new materials – avoiding costly corrections of inaccurately entered information on materials for

example, that would result from vendor controls. Contracting out would eliminate some of these supports that staff now provide.

Third, it would seem to us that the most important element of proposing change to the delivery of service would be a careful examination of how the changes will affect library users and members.

The reference to 'shelf ready' does not include a range of other impacts the change in processing could have. In particular, there could be confused identification between the existing referral system and a new one defined by a vendor, and there could be duplications of references if there is no central control on cataloging.

Taken as a whole, the document does not provide the type of notice contemplated by the Collective Agreement, and therefore we cannot support it. Our position on this is based on the information available, or rather the lack of information available, and may change if the information is provided.

The union thinks it would be wise to consult the staff themselves and get their input on the proposed change, or even more constructively, their recommendations on how processing could be improved.

We believe that a strong business plan process should be completed and analyzed before decisions are made on what should be done with the cataloguing

component, and the allocation of staff. On the basis of a set of proposals, or one technically and financially supported proposal, we can then act appropriately.

As well, we would like to assure you that the union and the members working in the Library are always willing to work with management to find the best ways of maintaining services to the public.

Thank you for your time and attention.

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