

**GORD DELBRIDGE – Executive Policy Committee (EPC) - March 18, 2020**

Mayor Bowman, Members of council on EPC,

Thank you for the opportunity to present on the 2020 preliminary budget.

As you know, CUPE represents the largest group of workers at the City of Winnipeg. Our members value the work they do, and the services they provide contribute greatly to the quality of life in Winnipeg.

My presentation today will look at a number of cuts being proposed in various departments. As we've said at the standing committee meetings, CUPE is opposed to any cuts to services and staffing.

Many in our city depend on Winnipeg's social and cultural programs in order to live healthy lives and participate fully in their community.

Our libraries for example, promote education, learning, literacy, community, health and imagination among the public.

But the proposed budget threatens to undermine generations of work in the community – building trust, building relationships, and building a community of learners and teachers.

On some of the specifics:

Changing evening hours by closing at 8:00 pm would mean cutting 1,898 hours of access to our libraries.

This would be devastating to the countless college and university students who use our space to study.

It would have a devastating impact on adult learners who use our libraries after their working hours to study to advance their education or learn new skills through evening literacy programs and events.

This would also impact low-income Winnipeggers who also use our evening Library services.

Shutting down Sunday services will have a similar effect where we'll see 888 hours of less time to access our libraries.

This will create barriers to Winnipeggers who rely on library services over the weekend who may not be able to drop in at any other time.

Not to mention the impact to our part-time library workers who are the backbone to keeping our programs and services running in the evenings and on weekends.

With the proposed closures of Sundays and reduced weeknight hours, workers will be exposed to having their hours cut by a range of 24% - 30%.

It is both unfair and unreasonable to impose this burden on your employees, our members who have made a commitment to our libraries and to our communities.

I also want to touch on the 50% cut to leisure guide programming in this budget.

The city's leisure guide programs are a critical dimension of the quality of life for all Winnipeggers – they provide access to affordable and quality recreation and leisure programs that many in our community depend on including, children, youth, seniors, families, newcomers and people with disabilities.

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These cuts are short-sighted and our community deserves better.

At the city's 311 contact centre, the budget proposes a reduction of 4FTE's.

We know Winnipeggers call 311, and when call volumes are high, our members do everything they can to ensure Citizens get the answers and supports they need. Less staff would cause service request backlogs and increased wait times for the public.

Winnipeggers deserve a strong 311 system, with enough staff available to deliver.

In the Water & Waste Department, the proposed budget includes the reduction of 24 hour emergency coverage from 2 crews to 1.

We know our city has ageing water infrastructure, which is especially impacted during our long winter months.

We recall in years past the massive number of homes, properties, and businesses that experienced frozen pipes and major delays in having those pipes addressed.

At the time we acknowledged that our teams are already operating as skeleton crews, hardly able to keep up with the number of water-related emergencies across the City.

By cutting the 24 hour emergency coverage in half, you will put our city at greater risk through delayed response times to water main breaks and sewer back-ups. This will lead to increased property damage to homes and businesses.

The budget also proposes to reduce the Engineer in Training program that could result in a gap of trained engineers, a gap we cannot afford.

While I appreciate that the program would be scaled to meet *anticipated* demands, it leaves the potential of being unable to replace trained engineers in a timely manner if there is a sudden shortage or further reduction in staff.

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We need to ensure that we have the ability to draw on a strong pool of trained engineering staff, rather than a shallow one.

I also want to touch on the discontinuation of grants to important community organizations like Save our Seine and Fort Whyte Alive Slow the Flow. Discontinuing these grants would limit our City's access to important research, and community work these organizations provide.

While they are not run by the City directly, providing grants to community initiatives that protect our waterways and support responsible stewardship are critical to a thriving, healthy, and safe City for everyone.

Lastly, the proposal to close Waverley Fleet repair facility raises some serious red flags that may end up costing taxpayers more.

Winnipeg's fleet service is a well-run operation that has gone through years of steady improvements.

Closing this facility will result in increased repair and maintenance wait times and downtime for city vehicles and equipment.

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Delays in preventative maintenance would also result in increased risks of vehicle and equipment failure.

Not to mention the increased costs for external vendor repairs when the other two fleet repair facilities are unable to absorb the increased volume of work.

According to the Fleet Management SOA 2019 business plan, one of its strategic objectives is to be a leader in environmental stewardship through the management of the agency's fueling infrastructure and promote fleet emission reductions.

Closing Waverley will increase fuel consumption when you factor in the added time to bring vehicles and equipment from the south end of the city to the Thomas or Tecumseh facility. Couple that with added towing charges, down time and loss of productivity, it will put the city further behind.

The Staff at Winnipeg's Fleet Services give their absolute best efforts every single day to help in the repair and maintenance of city equipment and vehicles. They play an important role in helping to keep our city functioning.

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We are very frustrated at the proposed closure of this facility that lays out a plan to reduce 8 FTE's.

To make matters worse, our municipal workforce continues to suffer under decades of Vacancy Management.

Our City can reach a million residents, but without a robust workforce we will have a public service that is unable to meet the needs of our community.

The preliminary budget also proposes to establish a Transformative Fund through the sale of city assets. We'll be watching this process closely to ensure these initiatives do not undermine our public services now and into the future.

Our union has, for over a decade, been unafraid to call on City Councillors to increase property taxes over time to address the growing costs of running a City the size and age of Winnipeg.

We have also been outspoken against mismanagement and cost-overruns in major projects that have cost taxpayers millions that could have been spent on improving civic services.



We have supported organizations like the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives' proposed budgets, and have called on the City to bring services like Garbage and Snow Clearing back in-house to prevent important tax dollars from being sent out of our City.

CUPE also believes in free, accessible transit for all. Public Transit is a necessity for people to get to work, school, or to our recreation facilities.

We stand in support of our colleagues at the Amalgamated Transit Union, and will be working with them – as Winnipeg's municipal employees, to ensure our transit system works for everyone.

Finally, we are proud of our track record in working with city administration and council over the years. CUPE 500 has offered many suggestions on big ticket items and smaller on-the-ground solutions to make our city more accountable, more transparent, and offer better quality public services.

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At the same time our union has always been open to having difficult conversations with department heads and Councillors alike. We have worked collaboratively, and when we haven't, we have disagreed respectfully.

I'll conclude my remarks by reiterating CUPE's position: We are opposed to any cuts to our public services and programs. We are opposed to cuts to an already under resourced workforce.

Thank you.