

CUPE Local 500

Speaking Notes to **Executive Policy Committee**

**Re: Assiniboine Park Conservancy Inc. –
Management Agreement**

CUPE / *Canadian Union
of Public Employees*
Local 500

July 14, 2010

Good Morning Mr. Mayor, Councillors and Staff.

CUPE Local 500 always appreciates the opportunity to come to City Council and express its views on behalf of its members and the many citizens of Winnipeg.

CUPE Local 500 members have been providing valuable services in Assiniboine Park for many decades. There are close to two hundred Local 500 members, your employees, at its peak time, who work at the zoo, the park, and the Conservatory. Our members are proud they are employees of the City of Winnipeg and now they must choose between remaining employees of the City of Winnipeg or to report to a new employer, the Conservancy Board. This decision has added stress to these workers and their families.

The park also uses the services of other City departments. These departments are Public Works, Water and Waste and Community Services. These City departments provide many needed services such as snow clearing, pruning the trees, grooming cross country ski trails, painting street lines, making repairs to the various buildings including the plumbing and heating, repairing broken water lines, welding metal, park patrol and perform many other services in the park and the zoo.

Assiniboine Park is considered by many visitors and Winnipeg citizens as one of the main attractions to our city. A number of events take place in the park on an annual basis such as floral exhibits held at the Conservatory, annual picnics such as The Teddy Bear's Picnic, Boo at the Zoo, cricket matches, visitors to the zoo, and much more.

Many citizens use the park to jog, have lunch at noon time, bike ride, picnics, enjoy a family get together, and cross country skiing in the winter, just to name a few.

The park and zoo has also experienced a growing infrastructure deficit for decades. Buildings have been deteriorating for many years and the general infrastructure in the park and zoo is in a very serious state. Many of the zoo enclosures are outdated and need renewal.

The new added expansion of recreation infrastructure and improvements only enhances the beauty of Assiniboine Park and the zoo. CUPE Local 500 does however, have some very serious concerns about its members' welfare and the public ownership of the park.

Aside from labour relations and transition issues, there are other matters that should be examined. We question why the park had to be handed over to a private board in order to fund raise for the many upgrades needed. A fund raising board was used at the downtown Millennium Library and the City of Winnipeg was still the employer and its operation remained publicly owned and operated. We also have concerns that user fees in the park and zoo will increase substantially. These concerns have merit and I'm sure you can appreciate the uncertainty this situation has created.

The Local does wish to express its willingness to work with the new employer, the Conservancy Board, where ever possible.

CUPE Local 500 appreciated being included in the many workplace meetings in order to ease the uncertainty and stress in the workplace and at home. I cannot express the feelings that many of our members are experiencing about no longer being City of Winnipeg employees. They are very proud of being civic employees and in some

cases, their parents and grandparents worked in the park and zoo. Their dedication and commitment to their profession is outstanding. Their track record providing these front line services does not go unrecognized and is very much appreciated by the citizens of Winnipeg.

Thank you.

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