



## CUPE Local 500 Speaking Notes

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Alternate Service Delivery Committee

July 6, 2012

CUPE Local 500 represents employees involved in the clubhouse and maintenance operations at City-run golf courses.

While we are pleased to hear that the City has dropped its plans to sell Winnipeg's publicly owned golf courses, we have serious concerns and are opposed to the use of a "modified managed competition" process to determine their future operations.

CUPE's position is that we simply cannot support a process that has been untested, and that risks putting our membership to the unfair and unreasonable expectation that they need to look at internal "efficiencies" absent a true and quantifiable cost from the private sector. Too often the concept of 'efficiencies' is used as a smoke screen for privatization, contracting out and cutting wages, when in fact mounting evidence shows that the public option is most cost effective and accountable. Certainly, our city's current in-house operations are very lean and efficient.

Therefore, our opposition is not based on any notion that our members do not provide a quality level of service to the citizens of Winnipeg in an efficient and cost effective manner. To the contrary, we firmly believe that public services provided by unionized staff, and provided by municipal governments directly, are the most cost efficient method of providing services.

Over the past several years, Local 500 has recommended that the City formulate a business plan to examine its golf course operations. We strongly believe that through a capital improvement and marketing plan, the municipal golf courses have the potential to remain strong community assets.

CUPE has also provided this and previous Councils with numerous examples where we believe that significant savings could be achieved by reducing the role of the private sector in service provision and bringing services back in house.

### ***Examples***

- The Local has recommended that the City re-activate the one dollar per player pre-game to a “course improvement” fund. This money would be dedicated for infrastructure improvements. This was the original intention of this initiative when it was first introduced, but we do not believe that it was used for its intended purpose.
- We have advocated on several occasions that “packs of tickets” be sold. This would produce more overall sales, help the golf course operation plan more effectively, and benefit the citizens of Winnipeg by providing even more accessible recreation fees. To this day, this recommendation has not been acted on, nor has there been any response from Council on this issue.

- Much of the operational equipment for the golf courses is outdated and in need of renewal. Consequently, on several occasions, CUPE has indicated that the overall operation would improve by having more modern maintenance equipment in the field.
  
- Finally, more City community programs could be integrated into our golf courses, i.e. golf in the mornings and swimming in the afternoon.

Our public golf courses have been around since 1921 and have a long and proud history of providing accessible and affordable golf in our city. They have been a special part of Winnipeg's landscape for many decades and are essential to the quality of life we enjoy in our city. Unfortunately, due to lack of investment and political will, Winnipeg's golf courses have been allowed to deteriorate and fail in their operations over the years.

We firmly believe that they are, and can remain, profitable assets to the City of Winnipeg. Although transfers to general revenues stopped in 2009, there was \$1.7 million dollars transferred from 2003 – 2009. Thus, it is unclear to us how the argument can be made that these cannot be profitable operations. It is very likely the case that had these revenues been re-invested back into the golf courses, they

would not be in the condition they are in today.

The business arrangement, as it now stands for semi-private courses, must be revisited in the best interest of the citizens of Winnipeg. We believe the one-dollar lease per year fee for the semi-private courses can no longer be offered and should be renegotiated to competitive market terms. In addition, we would recommend that the City of Winnipeg examine charging rent at market rates to privately run golf courses as a method of generating revenue.

We also note that the City's operational review report (page 12) indicates that contract management could save the City \$14.5 million within the first 5 years. However, it also indicates that this is speculative, provided that a vendor would be willing to invest \$1 million per course. We suspect this would only be the case if it generated corresponding revenues.

Municipal golf courses play an important role in the lives of the citizens of Winnipeg. Each of the city courses has its own unique qualities and benefits that appeal to golfers of every skill level and age. In addition, their strategically placed locations make at least one course convenient to most parts of Winnipeg. They have provided affordable recreational opportunities for local residents and should continue to be publicly owned and operated for the enjoyment of everyone in the years to come. For this reason, we are extremely alarmed by the fact that there has been no public consultation on this issue.

Local 500 has a proud history of working with management and politicians in the City to find creative ways to provide the services that we do. Compressed work weeks, flexible shift arrangements, and other mechanisms have all achieved these ends. We will continue to work with the City on these types of initiatives, but we feel compelled to point out that Unions do not bid on the work that their members do.

CUPE has been an important part of the community for over 50 years and we want to continue to play a role in assuring public services remain available for the citizens of Winnipeg today, and into the future.

In closing, we have many questions and concerns regarding the City's overall vision for the City golf courses.

What does the City envision the golf courses will look like 3 years from now or 10 years from now? Is the City's commitment a short term one? Without a thorough business plan, CUPE remains cynical.

What are the City's expectations? What do you hope to achieve for the citizens of Winnipeg relative to our golf courses? What is the objective for the City in terms of providing services to the citizens of Winnipeg and the City owned golf courses?