

Changes to park policing will result in cuts to seven positions

Background

On December 5, 2008, the City's Public Works Department served notice to the Union of its intention to transform the Park Police Services to Park Patrol and Park Watch Ambassador Services. The proposed change in operation would result in the elimination of seven permanent Park Police positions. This budget reduction was submitted by the Public Works Department and approved by the City for implementation in 2009.

Currently, there are 14 permanent Park Police Officers with full policing powers. They are responsible for maintaining order and protecting public and private property in the City's major regional parks. All members are fully trained, sworn peace officers, and they meet the same hiring and training standards as members of the Winnipeg Police Service. In fact, all members are graduates of the Winnipeg Police Academy.

This change in operation will modify these positions to seven Park Patrol Officers while adding a compliment of student Park Watch Ambassador positions for the summer months.

"This is strictly a public-safety issue," said Mike Davidson, President of CUPE Local 500. "Our citizens have been able to enjoy some of the safest parks in Canada because of the presence of our Park Police. In our view, this type of change to an operation that protects public safety and enhances our city's quality of life is not in the best interest of the public."

Standing Committee wants current Park Police model reinstated

On March 10, 2009, the Standing Policy Committee on Infrastructure Renewal and Public Works recommended that the reorganizing of the Winnipeg Park Police at City Parks be halted and the current Winnipeg Park Police model be reinstated.

The recommendation to keep the current model is set to go before the City's Executive Policy Committee on March 19.

CUPE Local 500 President Mike Davidson will be making a presentation in support of the Standing Committee's recommendation.

City's Executive Policy Committee votes against recommendation to reinstate current Park Police Model

On March 19, 2009, the City's Executive Police Committee voted against the recommendation of the Standing Policy Committee on Infrastructure Renewal and Public

Works that the reorganizing of the Winnipeg Park Police at City Parks be halted and the current Winnipeg Park Police model be reinstated

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"This decision to reduce capacity is merely shifting the liability," said Mike Davidson, President of CUPE Local 500. "I don't believe the safety issues have been addressed and a delay to further study the current operation and the risks involved, would have been a more positive solution".

The proposed change to park policing will still require approval by city council when they meet on March 25.

CUPE Local 500 has been making presentations to the Standing Committee recommending that the Park Police service be retained.

"We are concerned that cutting back on highly trained and experienced personnel will affect what the citizens of Winnipeg get from the Parks and will also affect tourist potential," said Mike Davidson, President of CUPE Local 500.

The Winnipeg Park Police is a division of the Public Works Department and is the third largest Municipal police service in Manitoba. Their history dates back to 1897 when the Public Parks Board hired their first Special Constable.