

Speaking Notes

Standing Committee on Protection and Community Services

January 14, 2013

CUPE Local 500's position on the 2013 Operating Budget, City of Winnipeg

Good morning everyone and Happy New Year.

CUPE Local 500 represents employees at the City of Winnipeg including the Community Services Department. We also represent employees at the St. Boniface and St. James Museum and Winnipeg Humane Society.

Many children and families depend on Winnipeg's social and cultural programs in order to live healthy lives and participate fully in their communities.

Recreation programs such as learn to swim, has been burdened with long waiting lists for residents. Lack of program space and affordability means many of the residents who would most benefit from these programs can't get in, or can't afford them. And the shut down of Sherbook Pool, a facility that has served the community for the past 80 years, has residents concerned about future access to swim and other aquatic programs.

The city has always provided recreation at many outdoor pools, wading pools and splash pads in our city. However, the city's budget has not kept pace with many of the maintenance requirements for our pools. We can attribute this to the 14 years of property tax freezes.

The city also provides various learn to skate programs at our city-owned arenas. Public skating is valued by many families as it provides recreation opportunities to children who cannot afford to play organized hockey or ringette.

These recreation programs help to keep kids off the streets and are crucial to the health and well-being of our communities. If we cannot maintain swimming pools, recreation centres and programs, many individuals, young people and families will not have the opportunity to remain physically active and healthy.

The city needs to make sure that these services are adequately funded to meet the needs of our communities.

VACANCY MANAGEMENT

There is 13.6 m in vacancy management in this budget. This continuing practice has taken its toll on almost every single department within the city of Winnipeg. By cutting staff and leaving positions vacant, it undermines the ability of the city to deliver quality services. We believe vacancy Management is a non-transparent erosion of the city's front line services and ultimately, will impair the cities ability to deliver needed programs.

To a varying degree, we are seeing the city's Level 2 departments come under some type of budget constraint. All of these reductions in staffing levels equal less service to the citizens of Winnipeg. In our view, every city department needs a certain amount of inflation level adjustment for this years operating budget. The citizens want these services and value them.

ACCELERATING THE ALTERNATE SERVICE DELIVERY (ASD) REVIEW AND IMPLEMENTATION PROCESS

The budget contains an allocation of \$350,000 for this process. It further notes an anticipated saving of \$2 m each year. The union is unclear as to what exactly the "accelerated alternate service delivery process" is, and where these saving will materialize. In our view, the ASD process is flawed and history has shown it doesn't work.

CUTS TO GRANTS TO NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATIONS

A number of local charities and non-profit organizations will have their grants cut by 10 per-cent.

The proposed cut of \$45,000 to the St. Boniface Museum could result in less advertising and a possible reduction to the hours of operation.

Even Winnipeg Harvest and the United Way will receive cuts in this budget. These community organizations provide vital social services to hundreds of

thousands of people throughout the city—single parents, abused women, young children and teenagers, the elderly, the physically challenged, the homeless and new immigrants.

The Winnipeg Humane Society just recently announced layoffs. Although they aren't seeing a grant cut from the city, they need more funding from both the city and province.

In closing, we view the increase of \$600,000 to the Councilors' representation allowance as very significant, and believe that this money would be better spent in maintaining the grant dollars to these local charities and non-profit organizations, and increasing the grant to the Winnipeg Humane Society.

Furthermore, we believe the \$350,000 allocated for accelerating the alternate service delivery (ASD) process, would be far better spent on maintaining programs and facilities that our citizens use and depend on.

Those are our comments.

Thank you

LSU/kb