



## CUPE Local 500 Speaking Notes

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Standing Policy Committee on Protection  
and Community Services

Re: 2014 City of Winnipeg Operating Budget

December 5, 2013

Thank you for the opportunity to present our views on the proposed 2014 operating budget.

As you know, CUPE Local 500 represents employees at the City of Winnipeg including the Community Services Department. Our presentation will look at the cuts being proposed under this Committee's jurisdiction, and other jurisdictions that we feel will impact services and the quality of life in our city.

Many children and families depend on Winnipeg's social and cultural programs (pools, children, youth and seniors recreation programs for example) in order to live healthy lives and participate fully in their 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.

There are some positive merits to the proposed budget – more money for library materials, increased funding for Aboriginal Youth Strategy, grant increases to community centres, and increased investment in parks and recreation. However, these do not balance the overall impact of the reductions and cost-saving initiatives outlined in the budget.

We are disappointed that this budget does not include funding to address the necessary repairs and maintenance requirements for Sherbrook Pool.

For over eight decades, Sherbrook Pool has provided accessible recreation to individuals, families, seniors, youth-at-risk, people with disabilities and newcomers. It has been home to numerous swim clubs over the years and has served as a meeting place for many people in the community.

In November of 2012, the City closed Sherbrook Pool as a result of corrosion of the structure, which requires \$2.7 million in immediate repairs and \$3.5 million in maintenance repairs over the next 20 years.

Local 500 members are proud of community recreation facilities such as Sherbrook Pool. As we've said many times before, as a union, we care about our community and want to assure public services remain available and affordable for all Winnipeggers.

Even Mayor Katz commented in the media yesterday "that just because the money wasn't allocated in the budget, doesn't mean it's not available."

"Sometimes people have concerns because they don't have all the facts," Katz said. "There's more money in there, don't worry."

"Sometimes you have to get creative . . . I think there are a couple of creative ways to accomplish this."

*Source: Winnipeg Free Press, Online Edition – December 4, 2013*

Local 500 strongly urges that the proposed budget include the appropriate funding to repair and re-open Sherbrook Pool so that it remains a strong community attribute and asset.

### **ELIMINATION OF COMMUNITY CRISIS RESPONSE SERVICE**

The community crisis response team provides vital support and response services to Winnipeg's most vulnerable and at risk citizens by:

- Connecting citizens to available agencies in relation to mandated services (i.e. building closures, water disconnections, pending tax foreclosures, homeless individuals requiring frequent emergency response);
- Providing short-term intervention to people who have been identified at risk;
- Providing support to various civic departments (for example: police, by-law, fire/paramedics, water and waste, and planning, property and development) who encounter individuals experiencing personal difficulties;
- Assisting in the City's Emergency Response in the event of a large-scale disaster.

Eliminating this important service will not only compromise the safety of at risk individuals, but will put more strain on emergency services personnel who should otherwise be performing their normal operational duties.

Local 500 strongly recommends that funding be maintained in this budget to provide ongoing crisis support and response services for the citizens of Winnipeg. We cannot continue to allow the burden of budgetary shortfalls to be shouldered by citizens who desperately need our help.

**Elimination of community resource coordination and community development (Suburban areas)**

The provision of community development and neighbourhood support systems are essential components of healthy communities and improved quality of life.

Local 500 members who work as Community Development workers, are the direct liaisons to community groups/organizations who work together on strategies relating to neighbourhood based recreation initiatives, crime reduction and neighbourhood safety. In addition, this program provides new comers and settlement workers with information and links to city services and resource agencies.

The proposed cuts to community resource coordination and community development will hamper existing efforts to improve our neighbourhoods and ultimately, our communities.

Once again, Local 500 recommends that funding be maintained in the proposed budget for this important and vital service.

## **VACANCY MANAGEMENT**

There is 14.1 million in vacancy management in the proposed budget. This continuing practice of not filling vacant positions, has taken its toll on every single City department. The effect of vacancy management includes:

- A decreased capacity to deliver services to the public;
- Poor morale within the civic workforce;
- Reduced ability to redeploy injured and disabled workers;

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, value and deserve these services.

## **Alternate Service Delivery (ASD) Review**

The budget contains an allocation of \$2.4 million in savings through an alternative service delivery review to find more efficient ways to deliver city services. As we have said many times before, the city should be looking at opportunities to bring services back in-house (i.e. garbage collection

services) that are currently provided by the private sector. The experience across Canada is that private delivery of public services or the privatization of public infrastructure is not working in the public interest.

The city is actively pursuing contracting out of custodial services to the private sector. CUPE has proven time and again, that dedicated and experienced public employees are the best people to deliver public services.

### **Mandatory Unpaid Leave**

Local 500 members are proud civic employees who are dedicated to the provision of quality public services. They must live with the terms and conditions of our collective agreement that we bargained in good faith with the City, and so too should City Council. The proposal for mandatory unpaid leave for “non-essential” employees is not only bad public policy, but is a prescription for bad labour relations.

Over the past number of years, Local 500 has negotiated and/or worked with the city on a number of initiatives that have contributed greatly to the overall efficiencies and cost savings for the City, including, but not limited to the following:

- Wage freeze in 2011

- Letter of Understanding – Re: Education, Training and Staff Development Fund;
- Improvements to workplace, health and safety;
- Scheduling of shifts in our arenas and Water and Waste Department;
- Letter of Understanding – Change Initiatives;
- Agreement to end provisions for sick leave cash-out to all employees hired after February, 1995;
- Realignment of custodial services
- Cost savings from Student Labourer rate

In our view, Local 500 members have contributed more than their fair share in providing efficiencies and cost savings to the city.

In conclusion, we simply cannot support a budget that does not adequately fund programs and services, and reduces staffing levels. Ultimately, it is Winnipeggers who will pay the price of reduced services.

Thank you.

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