Agenda – Executive Policy Committee – May 10, 2006

REPORTS

Item No. 1 Red Tape Commission - Recommendation No. 5 - Easy Pay Policy File GG-5

ADMINISTRATIVE RECOMMENDATION:

1. That subject to recommendations 2 and 3, Council adopt the following standard for payment options offered citywide in order to provide for a consistent approach:

   "Any citizen should be able to conveniently pay any bills issued by the City of Winnipeg by cash, cheque, debit cards or credit cards.";

2. That, in addition to tax and water bills being exempt from the standard, deposits on any bid opportunities related to real estate transactions issued by the City also be exempt from the standard;

3. That the Chief Administrative Officer be delegated the authority to exempt operational areas of departments from the standard in the event it can be demonstrated by the department that there are financial or logistical issues which would impose an unreasonable burden on the City; and

4. That departments continue to work toward internet based registration and payment capabilities and that the plans for implementing them be included in the annual operating budgets for departments.

Agenda – Executive Policy Committee – May 10, 2006

DECISION MAKING HISTORY:

COUNCIL DECISION:

On January 25, 2006, Council concurred in the Executive Policy Committee recommendation and adopted the following:

1. That an "easy pay" strategy to offer customers a consistent standard for payment options citywide be endorsed and that the Administration report back in ninety (90) days with a recommended policy for approval.

2. That tax and water bills can be payable with a credit card as a cash advance only and that this practice continue for these bills until either favourable commission terms are negotiated, or other measures can be taken to mitigate the costs of accepting credit cards for these bills.

3. That Corporate Finance Department support departments in their efforts to expand the types of payment options made available.

4. That Corporate Communications design an "easy pay" graphic for posting at City locations and ensure the "easy pay" message is communicated to the public on an ongoing basis.

5. That the Proper Officers of the City be authorized to do all things necessary to implement the intent of the foregoing.

REPORT

RE: FINAL REPORT OF THE MAYOR'S RED TAPE COMMISSION – RECOMMENDATION #5 – "EASY PAY" POLICY

FOR SUBMISSION TO: Executive Policy Committee

ORIGINAL REPORT SIGNED BY: Jo-Anne Ferrier, Acting Chief Financial Officer

REPORT DATE: April 7, 2006

RECOMMENDATION(S):

1. That subject to recommendations 2 and 3, Council adopt the following standard for payment options offered citywide in order to provide for a consistent approach:

   "Any citizen should be able to conveniently pay any bills issued by the City of Winnipeg by cash, cheque, debit cards or credit cards.";

2. That, in addition to tax and water bills being exempt from the standard, deposits on any bid opportunities related to real estate transactions issued by the City also be exempt from the standard;

3. That the Chief Administrative Officer be delegated the authority to exempt operational areas of departments from the standard in the event it can be demonstrated by the department that there are financial or logistical issues which would impose an unreasonable burden on the City; and

4. That departments continue to work toward internet based registration and payment capabilities and that the plans for implementing them be included in the annual operating budgets for departments.

REPORT SUMMARY

Key Issue(s):

Involves a response to Recommendation #5 from the Final Report of the Mayor's Red Tape Commission.

Implications of the Recommendation(s):

General Implications

	None
X	**For the organization overall and/or for other departments**
X	**For the community and/or organizations external to the City**
	Involves a multi-year contract

Comment(s):

Some departments within the City could experience an increased workload and financial implications in adhering to the standard being recommended. In addition, there may be customer service implications at the public counter areas at both 510 Main Street and the Bilingual Service Centre in that certain types of bills (tax and water) accepted at these counter will not be payable by credit card.

Policy Implications

X	**No**
	Yes

Comment(s):

Environmental Implications:

X	**No**
	Yes

Comment(s):

Human Resources Implications:

X	**No**
	Yes

Comment(s):

Financial implications

	Within approved current and/or capital budget
X	**Current and/or capital budget adjustment required**

Comment(s):

Budget adjustments may be required to allow for commission expenses, design, production and communication costs related to the “easy pay” graphic or other costs. Internet based solutions would also have financial requirements. These costs are not known at this time.

Report

REASON FOR THE REPORT:

At the January 25th, 2006 Council meeting, the following clause was adopted with respect to Recommendation No. 5 of the Final Report of the Mayor's Red Tape Commission dated June 28, 2005:

"That an "easy pay" strategy to offer customers a consistent standard for payment options citywide be endorsed and that the Administration report back in ninety (90) days with a recommended policy for approval."

This report contains the Administration's response to the adoption of that clause.

HISTORY:

On November 23, 2004, the Mayor officially established the Red Tape Commission, chaired by Councillor Franco Magnifico, to review City operations and regulations in order to improve customer service while granting administrators more freedom to innovate.

The Red Tape Commission submitted a final report, dated June 28, 2005, containing 30 general recommendations, each with numerous more detailed sub-recommendations.

On January 25th, 2006, Council adopted 5 clauses with respect to Recommendation No. 5, one of which required the Administration to report back to Council within ninety days with a recommended policy for approval.

DISCUSSION:

In order to gain an understanding of the challenges that exist with respect to the current situation at the City regarding payment options, the following information was included in the report Council received in January:

The City currently has 83 terminals available in 72 different locations to accept cash, cheque, debit card and credit card payments for a variety of different services. In addition to accepting payments at these locations, some City of Winnipeg bills can be paid from home through internet banking or telephone banking services offered by various financial institutions, at most of these financial institutions, or through the mail. The City accepts credit card payments via the internet through the City's website for Planning, Property and Development programs and is currently working on offering this

same service for some of the Community Services programs. In addition, some City services are available at retail and other outlets throughout the city.

The chart on the following page (updated to include any changes that have occurred since the initial report in January) highlights the forms of payment accepted for the various services offered by the City:

CITY OF WINNIPEG ACCEPTED FORMS OF PAYMENTS	City of Winnipeg Locations			Online and Telephone			Other Locations	
	Cash/ Cheques	Debit Card	Credit Cards (1)	Personal Banking (2)	City of Winnipeg Website (3)	3rd Party Services (3)	Financial Institutions	Retail and Other Outlets
Community Services:								
-Leisure Guide Activities	x	x	x					
-Ice Rentals	x	x	x					
-Athletic Field Rentals	x	x	x					
-Pools	x	x	x					
-Leisure Centres	x	x	x					
-Assiniboine Park Zoo	x	x	x					
-Museums	x	x	x					
-Animal Services SOA	x	x	x	x			x	x
-License Branch	x	x	x					
-Libraries	x	x	x					
Transit:								
-Bus Tickets	x	x						x
-Bus Passes	x	x						x
-Chartered Buses	x	x						
Water & Waste:								
-Water Bills	x	x		x			x	x
-Landfill	x							
Police:								
-Alarm Permits	x	x						
-Criminal Record Checks	x	x						
Planning, Property & Development:								
-Building Permits, inspections, etc.	x	x	x		x			
-Golf Courses SOA	x	x	x					
-Municipal Cemeteries	x	x	x					
-Parking Authority SOA	x	x	x		x	x (4)		x
Public Works:								
-Permits	x	x	x					
Corporate Finance:								
-Realty and Business Taxes (5)	x	x		x			x	
Fire Paramedic Services:								
-Ambulance	x	x						

(1) Credit Card Payments include Visa, MasterCard and American Express.

(2) Could be either a debit to a bank account or a cash advance on a credit card.

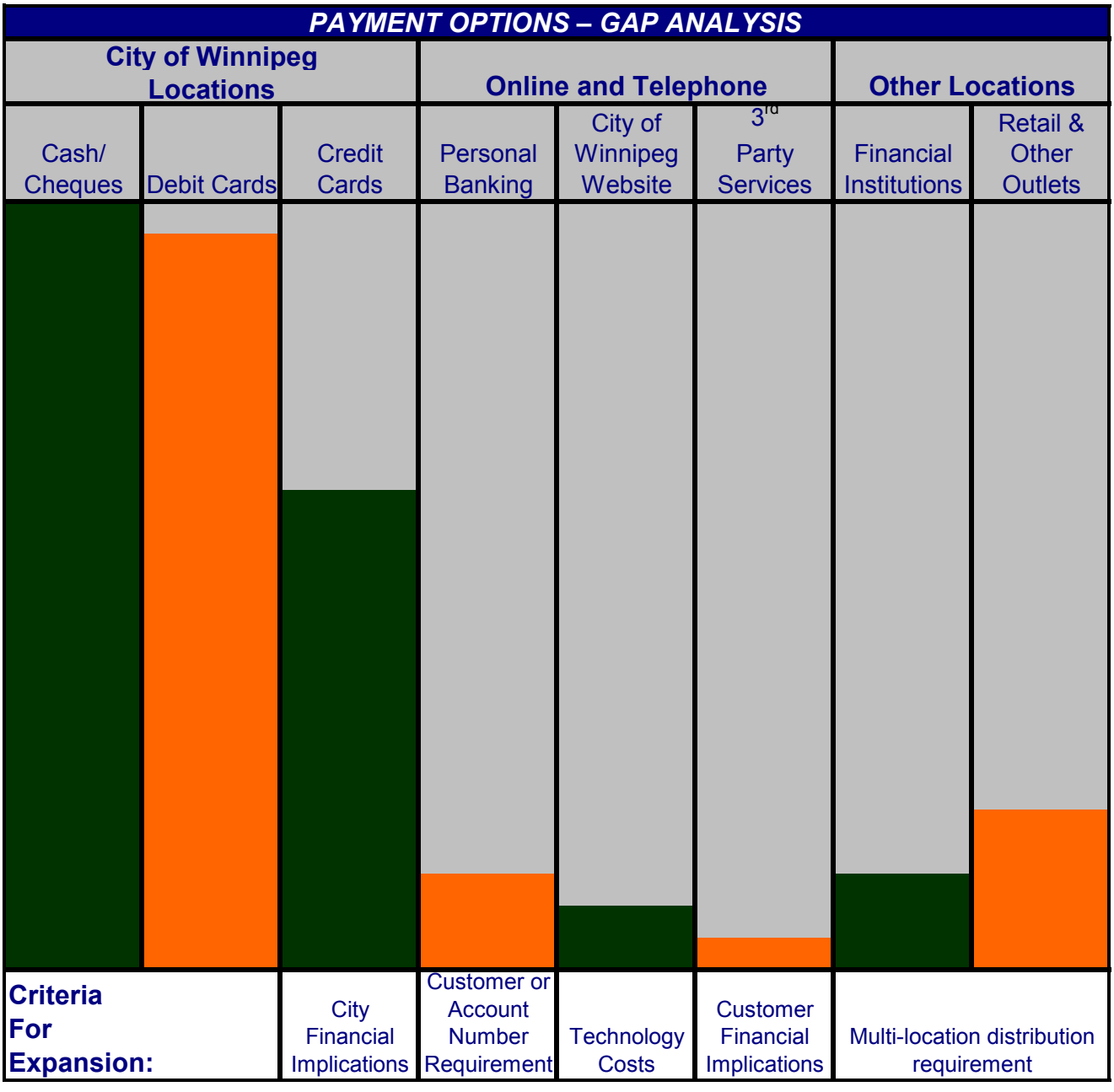
(3) Credit card payments only.

(4) Parking tickets are payable over the telephone and online with a credit card through a 3rd party service provider.

(5) Taxes can be paid through the City's TIPP (Tax Installment Payment Plan) through automatic withdrawal from a bank account.

Gap Analysis:

The following graph shows where the City has gaps in offering all forms of payments as it relates to the services in the previous table:



As is indicated at the bottom of the graph, there are a number of criteria to consider before expansion of existing payment options occurs.

Since the time of the initial report, the administration has concluded a consultation process with City departments and completed an analysis of payment options offered by other Canadian municipalities.

With regard to the consultation process with departments, the following can be reported:

1. There is a general acceptance of the recommended standard and a willingness on the part of departments to work toward it.
2. The Libraries Services Divison of the Community Services Department began accepting credit cards for payments in early February.
3. The Community Services Department began implementation of its CLASS system in the Fall of 2005. The system will streamline the registration process for all Leisure Guide and Aquatic programs the department delivers. In the Fall of 2006 a web based link to the CLASS system will be available allowing citizens to register and pay for their programs online. Future possibilities include providing access to this technology for other City departments to streamline their payment processing and offer more convenient services to citizens.
4. The Transit Department is pursuing the acceptance of credit cards to pay for bus tickets and passes as well as for bus charters. Transit is not in a position to be able to offer the acceptance of debit or credit cards on board buses at this time but do have plans to study this going forward.
5. Parking Services began accepting credit cards for parking tickets in December.
6. The Water and Waste Department is responsible for the operations of a payment counter located at 510 Main Street. Currently, payment transactions can be completed for water bills, transit tickets and transit passes, ambulance bills, parking tickets, parking permits, business tax, realty tax, and other sundry items such as animal licences and local improvements. The Water & Waste Department is concerned about conflicting customer service expectations that could arise from accepting credit card payments for only certain types of City bills. A person who presents both an ambulance bill and water bill at the counter at 510 Main Street would only be able to pay the ambulance bill with a credit card if they chose that form of payment. A situation such as this may not be viewed positively by that person. These same concerns would exist for the bilingual service centre in St. Boniface.
7. Most of the departments consulted are in various stages of planning for internet capabilities in the future. The common theme among them was concern for where they would obtain the funding to proceed given the expensive nature of undertaking this type of process.
8. The Corporate Communications branch of the CAO Secretariat has researched the design, production and communication of the easy pay graphic and has developed some options for consideration related to this.
9. An RFP for debit card and credit card processing is being developed by the Materials Management branch of Corporate Finance and is expected to be issued before the end of March. The RFP includes a request for information

regarding other alternatives that may be available with respect to payment options for city services.

10. The Council Building Kiosk will be making arrangements to accept debit and credit cards for purchases of souvenirs, etc.

With regard to the research completed on payment options offered by other Canadian municipalities, the following can be reported:

1. The cities included in our research were Victoria, Vancouver, Calgary, Edmonton, Saskatoon, Hamilton, Toronto, Ottawa, Montreal and Halifax.
2. Eight of the ten currently accept credit cards for transit tickets and passes.
3. Five of the ten accept credit cards at their Landfills.
4. Two of the ten accept credit cards for ambulance bills and burn permits.
5. Winnipeg is not lagging in the area of online payments as we appear to offer (or are in the process of offering with Community Services CLASS system) about the same level of online services as the other Canadian municipalities.

As directed in the previous report approved by Council in January, taxation and water bill payments will continue to be excluded from the standard being recommended. In addition to the various additional payment options already in place for these bills, the City will continue to explore new opportunities as they become available to provide citizens with the widest range of options possible. Over the next several months the Corporate Communications Branch will implement the recommendations with respect to developing and communicating the easy pay options to the public.

Financial Impact Statement Date: March 10, 2006

Budget adjustments may be required to allow for website development costs, commission expenses, design, production and communication costs related to the "easy pay" graphic or other costs. These costs are not known at this time.

"Original signed by Carrie Erickson"
Carrie Erickson
Manager of Finance & Administration

In preparing this report, there was consultation with and concurrence by:

This Report Submitted By:

Department:	Corporate Finance Department
Division:	Financial Services
Prepared by:	Garry Steski, Manager of Financial Services
File No.	