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Food for Thought on
Re-establishing a Police Commission

1. Policy Perspective

- You will not find the term law enforcement officer in the Criminal Code of Canada. The term that is used is peace officer. There is a big difference between keeping the peace and enforcing the law. Peace keeping is a more proactive and preventive form of policing, while law enforcement is more of a reactive approach.

- Need to have a debate on whether the current approach to community policing by the Winnipeg Police Service is effective – are we finding the right balance between peace keeping and law enforcement functions.

- Various strategies of policing are needed for different areas of the city – in the inner city the police need to strengthen a relationship based approach to service delivery
    - imagine if the public school system was run by only using substitute teachers
    - imagine if the health system was run by only having emergency wards and no family doctors

- Presently there is a revolving door of police officers coming into inner city neighbourhoods to address crisis situations – we need to find a better balance of policing strategies that address proactive problem solving as well as law enforcement.

- In order to be effective peace officers, the police need to learn about the strengths of the local community as well as the challenges of the neighbourhood. If the police only relate to the community by dealing with the criminal element, it is inevitable that the police will become jaded with and disrespectful of inner city neighbourhoods as they will only develop a one dimensional view of the community.

- There are important structural issues that need to be addressed in the inner city that have an impact on issues law and order, and public safety – these issues require a proactive, problem solving approach that involve the police service
    - 27% of the students in the downtown and 22% of the in the north end are graduating from grade 12 (Manitoba Centre for Health Policy, 2004)
    - 80% of the youth in custody in Manitoba are Aboriginal (Department of Justice Study, Government of Canada, 2004)
    - the percentage of Aboriginal adults in custody in Manitoba increased from 47% in 1989/90 to 59% in 1998/99. (Aboriginal People in Manitoba Report, 2006)

2. National Perspective

- Winnipeg is the only major city in Canada that does not have some form of civilian police commission to oversee the police service – either we are ahead of our time or out of step with the rest of the country on the issue of police governance.

- There are a range of approaches regarding the structure of police commissions across Canada (see attached chart)

- Vancouver Police Commission

    - addresses policy complaints vs. individual officer conduct complaints
    - holds its monthly meetings in different neighbourhoods throughout the city to promote accessibility

- As the July 10, 2006 administration report on the Re-Establishment of the Winnipeg Police Service identified – the Canadian Association of Police Boards would be an excellent resource to provide technical assistance on police governance issues.

3. Provincial Perspective

- The provincial government is in the process of beginning to review the *Police Act* – the timing is good for an inter-governmental committee to examine the issue of police governance and identify a range of models regarding the role and structure of police commissions.

- It would be important to involve the provincial government in the review of re-establishing a police commission in order that issues such as enabling legislation could be examined, as well as relationships to existing provincially mandated organizations such as the Law Enforcement Review Agency.

- Aboriginal, refugee and inner city organizations would be very supportive of working in partnership with City Council to make the case to the provincial government about the importance of establishing an inter-governmental committee to explore the feasibility of re-establishing a police commission for the City of Winnipeg.

4. **City of Winnipeg Perspective**

- The July 10, 2006 administration report on the Re-Establishment of the Winnipeg Police Commission identified that under the existing structure, "policy matters related to police services are the responsibility of City Council's Standing Policy Committee on Protection and Community Services".

- The Standing Policy Committee on Protection and Community Services has unanimously recommended that a provincial and municipal inter-governmental committee be formed to examine the feasibility of establishing a police commission and to develop a report with recommendations by December 31, 2006.

- Preliminary discussions with some of the members of City Council indicates that at least 10 City Councillors support the concept of establishing a provincial and municipal inter-governmental committee to examine the feasibility of establishing a police commission.

- The idea of re-establishing a police commission has been discussed over the past number of years but has not come to City Council for a formal vote to determine the will of Council on this issue. The last time City Council formally addressed the issue of a police commission was in 1986. The proposed recommendation to establish an inter-governmental committee to explore the feasibility of establishing a police commission would provide City Council with the required research and policy options to make an informed decision in order to take a formal vote on this issue.

COMPARATIVE DATA
POLICE SERVICE BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS

City	Number of Board Members	Mayor	City Councilors	City Council Citizen Appointment	Provincial Citizen Appointment
Winnipeg	0	0	0	0	0
Vancouver	7	1	1	0	5
Edmonton	9	0	2	7	0
Calgary	9	0	2	7	0
Regina	5	1	2	2	0
Saskatoon	5	1	2	2	0
Toronto	7	1	2	1	3
Ottawa	7	1	2	1	3
Montreal	7	0	6	0	1
Halifax	7	0	3	3	1