RE: Public Education Plan – Wastewater Improvements

FOR SUBMISSION TO: Executive Policy Committee

ORIGINAL REPORT SIGNED BY: Barry MacBride, P.Eng
Director, Water and Waste Department

REPORT DATE: March 12, 2007

RECOMMENDATION:

That this report be received as information

Report Summary

Key Issues:

- The Executive Policy Committee requested a report on a public education campaign related to wastewater improvements.
- A modest public education campaign consisting of a bill insert, limited newspaper and radio advertisements, and web site enhancements may meet the intention of the motion by EPC.
- The cost of this kind of campaign would be in the order of $130,000 for newspaper and radio advertising. This would be in addition to the cost of about $6,000 for our normal bill insert announcing the price increase which will begin shortly.

Implications of the Recommendation(s):

General Implications

(X) None

( ) For the organization overall and/or for other departments

( ) For the community and/or organizations external to the City

( ) Involves a multi-year contract

Comment(s):

Policy Implications

(X) No

( ) Yes

Comment(s):

Regulatory Implications

(X) None

( ) Eliminates or reduces regulatory impact

( ) Proposes regulatory impact

Comment(s):

Environmental Implications

(X) No

( ) Yes

Comment(s):

Human Resources Implications

(X) No

( ) Yes

Comment(s):

Financial Implications

(X) Within approved current and/or capital budget

( ) Current and/or capital budget adjustment required

Comment(s): Since the report is for information only, no adjustment to the budget is required as a result of this report. Should the City proceed with a public education program, an extra appropriation would be required.

Report

REASON FOR THE REPORT:

On February 14, 2007, the Executive Policy Committee referred the following to Administration for report back in 30 days or less, namely:

> "That the Chief Administrative Officer develop and implement a public education campaign, which may include the insertion of printed information in the water/sewer bill envelopes, illustrating steps taken by the City of Winnipeg to address pollution issues arising from the state of Lake Winnipeg, and also demonstrating and placing into context the City of Winnipeg's contribution to reduce the levels of nitrogen and phosphorous released into Lake Winnipeg when compared to all pollution sources, be they Municipal, First Nation, Provincial, International, Agricultural or Industrial."

HISTORY:

On February 21, 2007, Council concurred in the January 9, 2007, Standing Policy Committee on Infrastructure Renewal and Public Works Recommendation No. 2, pertaining to the 2007 Sewer Rates, and adopted the following:

2. Effective April 1, 2007, the sewer rates based on water used, be increased to $4.46 from $3.87 per 100 cubic feet, which includes 31.3 cents per 100 cubic feet for the Environmental Projects Reserve (31.3 cents in 2006).

DISCUSSION:

Background

Recommendation 17 of the 2003 Clean Environment Commission was as follows:

> The City of Winnipeg should be strongly encouraged to develop and implement a permanent public education program to improve awareness of Winnipeg's wastewater collection and treatment systems, and to foster public involvement in activities focusing on water conservation and pollution prevention at source.

Over the past several years, the Department has improved its web site and has undertaken a variety of initiatives to begin to conform to the recommendation of the CEC. In 2006, we successfully completed the Environmental Assessment (EA) public consultation process required by the Federal Government for capital funding through

the Canadian Infrastructure Strategic Fund (CSIF). The process included posting the EA and comprehensive information about the Wastewater Treatment Upgrade Program on the City's Internet pages http://www.winnipeg.ca/waterandwaste/dept/CSIF/default.stm. Following that we invited interest groups and individuals that attended the 2003 Clean Environment Commission hearings, by email or direct mail, to provide feedback about the EA and/or the upgrade projects. We received a total of four responses from this key stakeholder group.

Other ongoing activities to assist in public education about water quality include:

- The City has provided a $50,000 grant to the Lake Winnipeg Research Consortium each year from 2005 to 2007 to support ongoing scientific studies on the Lake.
- The City is a member of the Red River Basin Commission (RRBC), which includes representatives from state/provincial and municipal governments in Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota and Manitoba. This intergovernmental, cross-border organization promotes communication and cooperation on water related issues in the Red River Basin. The current membership fee is $50,000 per year. On top of this the City sponsors the RRBC annual conference at $1,000 per year.
- The City has supported Red River Operation Clean Up program with a sponsorship grant of $2,000 annually for the past 4 years.

The Department is proceeding with our normal campaign to advise customers of the sewer rate increase effective April 1, 2007:

- bill insert (see Appendix 1) April to June subject to approval by the Chair of the Infrastructure Renewal and Public Works Standing Committee at a cost of about $2,500
- newspaper ads – one ad in the Saturday March 17 edition of the Winnipeg Free Press, and one ad in the Sunday March 18 edition of the Winnipeg Sun at a cost of about $3,500
- updates on our web site (see Appendix 2) – done

The total cost for this campaign is about $6,000.

Public Education Campaign

The elements of any public education campaign can be quite variable depending on the degree to which we need to reach the target audience and have the target audience be familiar with the issue. We believe from the motion that Council is looking at a fairly modest campaign using a number of advertising vehicles. The advertisements would refer readers to the web site which would contain the overall elements of the wastewater improvement plan as well as basic information on the relative contribution of nutrients. The site would also refer readers to other links including the CEC web site and the latest report of the Lake Winnipeg Stewardship Board and the Provincial background information on the overall plan to reduce nutrients.

The campaign would run for about eight weeks (mid-April to mid-June) and the cost would be as follows:

- minimum of three advertisements in each of these papers at a cost of $60,000
  - rural weekly papers (Interlake Spectator, Selkirk Journal)
  - Winnipeg Free Press (Saturday edition)
  - Winnipeg Sun (Sunday edition)
  - Canstar community newspapers
  - La Liberte
- radio advertisements – 30 second spots (162 ads per week over 6 stations for a total of 1,296 ads) at a cost of $70,000
- web site improvements – in house (see Appendix 3 for a draft)
- news release to kick off the campaign

The total cost for this campaign is about $130,000.

The website would include the relative contributions of nutrients from the City of Winnipeg.

<u>Theme</u>

- Doing our part to protect our rivers and Lake Winnipeg

<u>Key Messages</u>

- We are spending $900 million over the next ten years to upgrade our wastewater system
- Winnipeg's sewer system is over 100 years old and needs major improvements to meet tough new Provincial requirements

<u>Concerns</u>

From the perspective of the Department, the campaign would be educational in nature for our customers, stating the facts and describing the improvement plan. The messages would be one of the need for the City to be a partner with the Province, the Federal Government, and other stakeholders in understanding and improving the quality of discharges into Lake Winnipeg to optimize spending of limited resources.

COMMENTS: As the report is for information only, no financial impact statement is required

Original signed by M. L. Geer, C.A.
Moira L Geer, C.A.
Manager of Finance & Administration

IN PREPARING THIS REPORT THERE WAS:

Internal Consultation With and Concurrence By:

None

External Consultation With:

None

Attachments

Appendix 1 Copy for Bill Insert



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Appendix 2 Web site rate table



Rate Table on Web site

Appendix 3 Draft web site on wastewater improvements to complement public education



Wastewater Improvement Plan W

THIS REPORT SUBMITTED BY:

Department: Water and Waste
Division: Customer Service
Prepared by: Kathy Taylor
File No. 010-17-08-36-00