CANADIAN UNION OF PUBLIC EMPLOYEES
LOCAL 500

BRIEF SUBMITTED TO:

EXECUTIVE POLICY COMMITTEE

RE: POLICE ADVISORY BOARD REPORT



SEPTEMBER 19, 2007

CUPE LOCAL 500 BRIEF submitted to Executive Policy Committee – September 19, 2007
RE: POLICE ADVISORY BOARD REPORT

Thank-you for the opportunity to speak to this issue!

We would first like to state the discussion is not directed at the members of the Police Service, who everyday try to do their job to the best of their ability on behalf of the citizens of Winnipeg. Our comments are directed to the system they presently work under and how the citizens they serve feel disenfranchised from the Police Service.

Why would CUPE Local 500 speak to this issue? Firstly, we are citizens too. Secondly, we work closely with our fellow citizens and share their concerns about a system that is unable at times to address specific community needs within the City of Winnipeg.

CUPE Local 500 believes in citizen involvement. We have promoted this concept and will continue to advocate for participant democracy. Since Civic Government is the closest level of government to citizens, we believe citizens should have structures to participate in their local government on an on-going basis and not just every 4 years at the ballot box.

The Community Option being presented to Executive Policy Committee revolves around a Police Advisory Board which would take on a primary responsibility for advising council on the Police Service in the City of Winnipeg. On the surface, a Police Advisory Board would seem to assure on-going public input into a key area of concern in most City of Winnipeg neighbourhoods; which is public safety.

However, in our opinion the model proposed will likely not meet community expectations within a short period of time because it is strictly advisory.

Citizens want real input to effect necessary change in how Police Services are delivered to the City of Winnipeg. We believe such a structure does not take advantage of its citizens for the greater good and the public interest. We believe strongly in a Police Commission involving citizens with the power to influence the manner in which police services are delivered in our community. We strongly believe a Police Commission would be of great benefit the City for the following reasons:

1. Citizens need and should be involved into on-going civic democracy. It is about having public debate and trying to gain consensus on how police services should be delivered to Winnipeg citizens. A Police Commission would have a direct link and focal point as a community structure for such citizen participation. We believe citizens should have direct and meaningful involvement into the type of Civic services they pay for through municipal taxes.

2. A Police Commission will facilitate an educational process for Winnipeg citizens and for the Police Service. This is a two-way dynamic badly needed in our community. As a Community Development Worker, I have seen many ad hoc attempts to create understanding between citizen groups and the Police Service with at times very frustrating results. A Police Commission would help to resolve this issue over time.

3. A truly community based Police Commission will have many spin-offs such as: building public confidence in the civic political process and a greater appreciation of the men and women who provide all of us daily police services. It will also facilitate in building bridges into specific communities (i.e. Aboriginal, African, etc).

   We already have the citizen infrastructure to make this happen with Neighbourhood Associations, Community Safety Committees and Biz Associations. There is a vast array of talented, hard working citizens in these groups who should be given the opportunity to be nominated and if chosen actively participate in the decision making of a Police Commission.

   We also must not forget to include on the Police Commission, representatives of the rank and file members of the Police Service because their input would be invaluable.

4. We also believe the Police Commission will be a buffer for various community issues and entities for both City Council and also for the Police Department.

5. A Police Commission will engage citizens in Civic government on an ongoing basis because again a Police Commission will provide both a structure and a focal point to address community policing needs. Winnipeg, in its early history, was built by such community

involvement. Over the last few years, there has been much public concern expressed about citizen apathy towards participating in the electoral process. We believe this can be in part attributed to the disengagement of citizens in their civic government.

Local 500 is on record regarding participant democracy, when we proposed a citizen parks board. So, we agree wholeheartedly with a community proposed Police Commission and are here in support of our fellow citizens.

Thank-you!

Brief submitted by:

CUPE Local 500
September 19, 2007

GS/ng
cope 342

cc: Central Council

File: H:/Norina/Gary/CUPELocal500PoliceBoardReportBrief.doc