From: daniel hildebrand]
Sent: November 13, 2007 7:16 PM
To: Skundberg, Inga
Subject: Re: Request For Information

Hi Ms. Skundberg,

I would greatly appreciate if the following statement could be read to the committee. Thank you for your assistance in this.

Dear Chairperson and Members of the Executive Policy Committee,

As I am unable to attend today's meeting I appreciate you suspending the applicable bylaws and allowing my statement to be heard. I am very troubled by the speed with which this recommendation for a transit fare increase has moved forward. It was only last Friday, right before a long weekend, that the news of this proposal became widely known. Although I am sure that some people who oppose this fare increase have let it be known to the councillors through emails and phone calls, there has really been no time to allow those of us who oppose this measure to demonstrate our numbers and the depth of our feelings. I myself would have preferred to speak to the committee in person, but like so many other transit-users I work shifts, and it is very difficult to rearrange one's work schedule on such short notice.

That said, the concern I would like to raise with the committee is the following: mass transit is an essential component of public infrastructure, just as much as roads, traffic lights, or water and power utilities. But more than any other infrastructure, public transit has the potential to promote environmental sustainability and healthy urban spaces. More people using public transit is a good thing. In the last few years Winnipeg has slowly been increasing transit ridership. We could do even better. Nevertheless simple economics states that when we increase the cost of something it becomes less attractive. A fare increase will dissuade some potential riders and put them back into cars.

Some will say that high fuel costs constitute extraordinary new expenses justifying a fare increase. Yes, the cost of supplying fuel for Winnipeg transit has increased along with the cost of supplying fuel for private automobiles, but a responsible government should take this as motivation to make the fuel-efficient transportation more attractive.

Winnipeg already pulls a large portion of its transit revenue from user fees. Cities like Vancouver have built far better transit systems while taking a lesser portion of funds this way. I strongly urge you to reject this proposed fare hike.

Sincerely,

Daniel Hildebrand