Item 3 –
SPC – IRPW
March 10/09

CUPE Canadian Union of Public Employees
Local 500

CANADIAN UNION OF PUBLIC EMPLOYEES LOCAL 500 PRESIDENT MIKE DAVIDSON

SPEAKING NOTES

CITY OF WINNIPEG
EXECUTIVE POLICY COMMITTEE

RE: STATUS OF THE WINNIPEG PARK POLICE AT CITY PARKS

March 19, 2009

Presentation by Mike Davidson, Local 500 President

Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today about an important public service – one that has been highly successful throughout its existence in providing enhanced safety for citizens in Winnipeg's largest parks.

The decision that you will make today will basically determine the quality of services for all Winnipeggers and tourists who frequent and enjoy our parks throughout the year.

Today, I want to speak on behalf of fourteen of our members who provide policing services in Winnipeg's large parks, and therefore provide security services for every resident of Winnipeg.

We believe that the motion and recommendation of the Standing Policy Committee on Infrastructure Renewal and Public Works to reinstate the Park Police model is a sound one. We fully support maintaining this important service that has served the citizens of our City since 1897 and stands ready to continue serving for many years to come.

The Park Police provide on-site policing that assures the safety and security of our citizens in city parks. Their primary role is to enforce regulatory statutes, laws and by-laws. Their presence in the major city parks has a deterrent effect upon anti-social behavior and activities that would otherwise endanger and inconvenience the public. The Winnipeg public has come to rely on them so they can enjoy all that the parks, including the Zoo, have to offer.

Any move to take away their police functions, including their authority to arrest, will undermine the ability of the City to provide the full range of

essential services needed. As many studies of Community Policing have shown, the immediate and appropriate response of authorities is important in preventing major crime and deterring potential criminals.

There are many additional services the Park Police provide that are not strictly police functions, but which enhance the overall services they provide the City. Let me list a few examples of how their presence has kept problems and trouble from developing rather than responding after something has occurred.

- A family was lost in Kildonan Park and drove the wrong way on the road. The Park Police Officers stopped them before they did any damage and helped them get out of the park and find the address they were looking for - they were not charged, they were helped.
- An adolescent female was found passed out on the grass one night, after obviously consuming a great deal of alcohol. When her friends abandoned her she was taken to HSC first and then home to her parents.
- Frequently a senior citizen will report his or her car has been stolen. However, after the Park Police take the person to a few of the parking lots in the park, they will find the car.
- Late at night or early in the morning, single women will jog or walk in the park alone, indicating they feel it is safe for them to do so.
- There have been a number of incidents of bikers, skaters or joggers being injured in the parks. They have been assisted by the Park Police who called for medical support. During the flood of 1997, Park Police provided additional support and controls in the parks along the Red

River that allowed security personnel and volunteers to deal with the threats to the City.

We understand the City's concerns about risk and liability issues. However, we don't understand how reducing capacity is going to protect the City, the employees and the public. The City's proposal merely shifts the risks involved to the public rather than solve the problem.

The professionalism and commitment of the Park Police to serve Winnipeggers is important in maintaining safe and friendly park resources. Their authority and therefore the deterrent effect of their work keep the costs of criminal behaviour limited. And the personal attention they provide while on duty enhances the reputation of the City as being friendly and family oriented.

We strongly encourage you to adopt the recommendation by the Standing Committee to reinstate the Park Police model and maintain this important City service.

Thank you for your attention.

Speaking notes submitted by:
CUPE Local 500
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c.c. Central Council