To: Executive Policy Committee

From: Barry M. Hammond, 116 Grove Street, Winnipeg

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I see the water and waste controversy as a preview of things to come. Transportation may be the next area when council will choose an arms-length management group to help solve a city problem. Is this the future we want? Profit oriented companies differ from citizen leadership who may wish to help all people to a better quality of life. We need elected leaders to take charge of growing problems. To hand off such issues to private or other management merely penalizes grandchildren who will pay not only for water but for the management fees that help to provide such water.

The present water and waste issue is just a preview for the next era of change. Hence it is important not to hastily jump into a model that may look inviting to short range thinkers, but may hobble our children and grandchildren in the next 30 years.

I attended one of the so called "information and consultation" sessions. I read the signs and talked to the people available. Nobody raised the issues of future plans, should climate change or population increases happen to Winnipeg. I e-mailed a number of questions that I did not ask at the consultation. Some of these questions were: How many arm-length managers might the city need? What might be the projected salaries of each? Who do I call about a broken sewer pipe, the city or the manager? To date these questions have not been answered. We are unlikely to even consider making poverty history if we must pay managers, lawyers and consultants multi-thousand dollars salaries. Likely, in fact, more people who cannot pay for water will be excluded from access to water and waste if the fees for such services are raised.

We are told that the new model is like Manitoba Hydro. Surely we can be told also how the model is not like Manitoba Hydro. I don't recall the farming out process Hydro used . Was it like the one planned for Winnipeg's water and waste?

Were some council mechanisms such as the Alternative Service Delivery Committee or the Public Works Committee of Council used in reviewing this arms-length management proposal? If not why not!

I have heard mention of "fear mongering" when community groups raised issues about the strategic partner proposal. I am unclear about the difference between fear mongering and the democratic process. I hope presenting this paper is not fear mongering. However until the difference between legitimate community protest and fear mongering is defined I will not know if I am now fear mongering.

A question I have is about how much money the city will put in and how much the strategic partner may be putting in. I hope asking such is not fear mongering. Are the lawyers and consultant fees part of this contract? The Public Utilities Board will likely want to know more than the bottom line if they are asked to determine any increased water rates.

Also is the actual plan the 36 page document that I have not seen? Hopefully it can be made available at this meeting to citizens who may be interested in the plan.

The issues here are basically three:

1. Why is this major restructuring plan being raised through the summer? I need more time to look into the proposal, especially since my grandchildren and I will be paying for it.
2. Has city council looked ahead to the next issue to arise, which could be, for example, transportation. Will it be farmed out to an arms-length manager for action? Again, more time may allow this to be explored.
3. In precisely what ways is the city relinquishing public control over water and waste service? This is why I posed the question of who I inform about a broken sewer pipe. Do I call the city or the manager who arranged for the pipe to be installed? Has the city monitored the failure of private water providers in Moncton, Hamilton and other places? Has the city plugged the loopholes that allowed companies to avoid paying for spills, clean-ups and exorbitant rate hikes?

Obviously this ambiguous plan needs much further thought. I believe democracy is a good idea. Off loading city public utilities to outsiders is not a good idea. I think electing our managers is better than farming out such management to strategic partners. We need more leadership at city hall not the abdication of responsibility. We need to rethink this trend setting action.