David M. Sanders, M.A., LL.B.

February 4, 2014

Chair and Members
Standing Policy Committee on Infrastructure Renewal and Public Works
The City of Winnipeg
510 Main Street
Winnipeg, MB

Re: SPC Infrastructure Renewal and Public Works Committee
9:00a.m., Tuesday, February 4, 2014

Reports:

1. Establishment of a U-Pass Program
5. Discoloured Water Investigation Findings and Mitigation Plan
9. Request for Release of Stantec Traffic Study relating to the Fire Hall located at 1705 Portage Avenue (Station 11)

I am appearing this morning to speak to three items on the Committee's agenda:

1. Establishment of a U-Pass Program

I continue to support the establishment of the proposed U-pass transit fare program as soon as possible. I see no good reason for delaying the start of the program until September of 2016. The target should be September **2015.**

I would therefore suggest that the proposed Council motion be amended to have the Winnipeg Public Service do all things necessary to prepare and present a budgetary and implementation report for Council approval within the next four months (before the October civic election), so that if the suggested student referenda are successful in the fall, Council will be able to give final approval at its inaugural meeting in November, 2014, and the Universities may amend their policies and publications well in advance of the 2015 fall session.

5. Discoloured Water Investigation Findings and Mitigation Plan

I don't think the City of Winnipeg has any greater responsibility than the delivery of clean safe drinking water to all our citizens.

Not only our water, but our water treatment and distribution system policies, programs and facilities should be completely transparent.

This has not been the case for far too long.

Finally, long after the discoloured water problems, causes, and potential solutions have been identified, the City has now published a "Summary Report" prepared by CH2MHill and dated December, 2013.

Good.

But please don't think that one Council seminar and today's committee meeting is the end of this subject. Progress reports on this matter should be a regular agenda item for every meeting of this Committee for the foreseeable future.

CH2MHill was design consultant for Winnipeg's brand new $300 million Water Treatment Plant, which brought us the undrinkable brown water.

After insisting that Winnipeg's water generally met the "aesthetic standard" for manganese, the design consultant and the City Administration now say we should strive for a much more stringent standard of 30% of the previous concentration level.

To do this, we are having to look at a variety of measures, with some immediate costs, and with unknown "Potential Future Costs." If Councillors, like the general public, don't want big surprises in "future budget submissions," now would be a good time to get the Administration to admit what it may really cost to achieve the water quality we require.

Once again, the City needs an audit of a major project gone wrong. The Administration is recommending today that "a third party independent engineering consultant be engaged to review the water treatment plant design and subsequent discoloured water investigation reports," at a cost of $500,000,

This story cries out for such an independent review, but I wish to oppose the unrelenting efforts of the Interim Acting CAO to stampede councillors into giving him authority to award a single source engineering contract for the review. There is absolutely no reason why a recommended award, with justification, cannot be presented to EPC for approval within a reasonable timeframe.

Page 4-2 of the Summary Report states that "Deposits may be in consumer plumbing as well as in the water mains, and distribution main flushing does not remove manganese from the customer's plumbing."

That's us. What are we supposed to do? Many residential complexes, such as the one where I live, have spent large amounts of money during this past year trying to locate the sources of our brown water problems, and to rectify any possible causes within our buildings. Should we now submit claims for reimbursement to the City, for inclusion in any global claim for damages from those responsible for the water treatment plant design?

If the City had admitted what the problems were, as soon as they knew, we might have avoided a lot of unnecessary and expensive measures which have been taken by responsible building operators who understood that undrinkable brown water was simply not acceptable to Winnipeggers.

9. Request for Release of Stantec Traffic Study relating to the Fire Hall located at 1705 Portage Avenue (Station 11)

Why on earth is it necessary to make access to information requests, appeal to the Ombudsman, appeal to our apparently powerless Councillors, seek Council approval, and then be sidetracked to this Committee, just to get our civic Administration to release information such as this Traffic Study for a matter of considerable public concern?

If the Administration thought it was important enough to spend our taxpayers' money on, then we should be entitled to see what we paid for.

I trust that today this Committee will not allow this continuing stonewalling and cover-up by an Administration which seems to think that the public's business is none of our business.

Thank you.

David M. Sanders

DMS/bm