Agenda – Executive Policy Committee – May 7, 2014

REPORTS

Item No. 4 Bill C-23 Fair Elections Act – Public Consultation

COUNCIL DECISION:

On April 30, 2014, Council ruled automatic referral of the following motion to the Executive Policy Committee:

Moved by Councillor Smith,
Seconded by Councillor Eadie,

WHEREAS the Government of Canada has introduced Bill C-23, the so-called Fair Elections Act, which is currently before parliamentary committee;

AND WHEREAS the proposed changes, which are described by the Federal Government as "sweeping", include:

- Rescinding the hard-fought right of Canadians without ID to vote through vouching
- Disallowing the use of a Voter Identification Card as proof of address
- Forbidding the Chief Election Officer from educating citizens about these changes and any other proactive education on the voting process in Canada
- Increasing the contribution limit by 25% and exempting some expenses from spending limits
- Introducing bias into the oversight of the voting process by allowing the governing party to recommend names for poll supervisors
- Removing the ability of the Chief Election Officer to enforce penalties against those found to have violated the Act;

AND WHEREAS these changes were proposed with no public consultation and with only an hour-long meeting with the federal Chief Election Officer who has subsequently publicly critized the Act;

AND WHEREAS these changes would have major impacts on voter participation, including directly disenfranchising 120,000 voters who were able to vote in the last federal election as a result of vouching, and make it even harder for the 500,000 Canadians who say they did not vote in the last federal election because they lacked sufficient ID;

AND WHEREAS any changes that undermines voter turnout and confidence in the integrity of the democratic process at any level of government has a negative impact on all levels of government;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOVLED that the City of Winnipeg write a letter to local MP's, the Minister of Democratic Reform and the Prime Minister stating opposition to Bill C-23, the so-called Fair Elections Act, based on the provisions which are likely to reduce voter turnout and confidence in the integrity of the democratic process;

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the City of Winnipeg call upon the federal government to conduct country-wide public hearings to allow Canadians and experts to make submissions on measures to improve electoral accountability and transparency, and increase voter turnout.