Agenda – Council - May 27, 2014

Report – Executive Policy Committee – May 7, 2014

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

EXECUTIVE POLICY COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION:

On May 7, 2014, the Executive Policy Committee submitted the following to Council:

1. That the Council Motion of April 30, 2014 be received as information.

Report – Executive Policy Committee – May 7, 2014

DECISION MAKING HISTORY:

EXECUTIVE POLICY COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION:

On May 7, 2014, the Executive Policy Committee received as information the Council Motion of April 30, 2014, and submitted the matter to Council.

Further on May 7, 2014, the Executive Policy Committee received a communication dated May 7, 2014, from David Sanders in support of 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 criticized the Act;

Report – Executive Policy Committee – May 7, 2014

DECISION MAKING HISTORY (continued):

COUNCIL DECISION (continued):

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 RESOLVED 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.