Delegation for EPC:

Dear Councillors of the Executive Policy Committee,

My name is Marika Prokosh. I'm a West Broadway resident, academic library worker, writer, and disabled Winnipegger.

Reliable city services are what allow me to live a life that is active (pools), enriched (libraries, arts groups), accessible (buses), and safe (fire and paramedics, water and waste, snow clearing, housing inspectors, and community organizations. Note that I do not include police). These services are far less useful to me and to other Winnipeggers when they are not funded to allow them to be frequent, consistent, and flexible.

We are all experiencing a strange and unexpected time right now as we respond to COVID-19. I know you've been working hard and I appreciate your efforts. However. We are seeing the effects of what happens when services are cut close to the bone year after year: there is less flexibility to respond in a crisis. Not enough workers, not enough cleaning of buses, not enough funding for homelessness services. In the way that you don't want to delay the budget because you want to keep the money flowing, these services should not have to wait for meetings to be held to release funds for emergency cleaning and homelessness crisis outreach.

I would like to make a suggestion that is perhaps a bit dark: health officials warn that we may be social distancing for an extended period, and it may be some months that we avoid unnecessary travel where possible. Some cities are postponing non-urgent construction work. Perhaps we could take advantage of less wear and tear on our roads in 2020, and reallocate part of the roads budget increase to the U-Pass, library hours, transit route frequency, community service grants, and arts funding.

A crisis can allow us to be afraid and take the path of least resistance, or it can allow us a moment to be bold in how we offer care to our community. While my community members and I discuss mutual aid projects and support for folks with uncertain incomes, I ask you to make our work to support one another a bit easier, and cancel cuts to the services and organizations that make our city a place we love, a place where we have enough support to truly flourish.

Marika Prokosh
Winnipeg resident