From: Emma Durand-Wood <
Sent: Tuesday, January 19, 2021 10:55 AM
To: CLK-CityClerks <CityClerks@winnipeg.ca>
Cc: MayorBowman Allard, Matt ; Browaty, Jeff ; Gillingham, Scott (Councillor) ; Gilroy, Cindy ; Rollins, Sherri; Mayes, Brian
Subject: submission re: EPC January 20, 2021, item #4

Members of the Executive Policy Committee,

I'm writing in opposition to item #4 at tomorrow's EPC meeting, the proposed plebiscite question on whether voters support lowering the current residential speed limit from 50km/h.

I'm extremely dismayed that the matter of speed limits could be put to voters to decide. It's been suggested that since speed limits affect many Winnipeggers, they deserve to have a say on the issue. I urge you to think critically about this idea in two ways.

First, yes, lowered speed limits would affect a lot of Winnipeggers. Drivers who have not been educated on how lowered speed limits affect everyone positively may perceive that lowered speed limits will affect them negatively. But those who stand to be positively affected by lowered speed limits are those people who are not inside cars at all. They are children and teens, seniors, people with disabilities, and the poor who are trying to move about their city safely and comfortably. I ask you to think about whether those voices will be heard in a plebiscite.

Second, it is pretty obvious what would happen if this question were put to plebiscite. We know how drivers feel about this issue. In recent years, more than one public opinion poll has shown that people are generally opposed to lowering speed limits. Putting this question to a plebiscite is a dangerous one, because we're asking them to make a decision based on their opinions and preferences, when this a decision that needs to be made by science. And often what individuals want and what is best for society are two very different things.

Before seat belt use became compulsory, people across North America were opposed to them. Even those who thought seat belts could be useful didn't think they should be compulsory. Here in Manitoba there were petitions and passionate speeches in the Legislature. If you had put compulsory seat belt use to a vote, it almost certainly would have failed. In the end, evidence and science triumphed and thousands of deaths have been avoided. Today it's hard to believe that people used to drive around with their children unrestrained. It's the same thing with impaired driving - it used to be more or less socially acceptable. What would our world look like today if we'd let popular opinion on seatbelts and drunk driving shape public policy?

We've elected you as leaders to make the tough decisions, especially the ones that are "political" or "controversial", as this one is. Please do not allow this matter to go to plebiscite, but rather, follow science, stay the course with our speed limit pilot projects, and consider the well-being of all Winnipeggers.

Thank you,

Emma Durand-Wood