Submission to the City of Winnipeg Executive Policy Committee July 8, 2025

Submitted by Lisa Prefontaine, B.Mus. B.Ed.

I support the following recommendation passed at the Water, Waste, and Environment Standing Committee meeting on June 27, 2025: "1. *That, prior to the installation of the new meters, the Winnipeg Public Service be directed to present alternative options as described in the report, as well as an option to not have a transmitter installed on the property, to ratepayers who can provide proof of need of a medical exemption, such as a medical letter signed by a physician registered with The College and Physicians and Surgeons of Manitoba or proof of the ability to claim the Canada Revenue Agency Disability Tax Credit.*"

We need more consideration on the following points:

1. The option to opt out should be available to all residents, not just those with proof of a medical exemption. At the very least, allow the medical letter to be signed by any medical doctor registered in Canada (not just Manitoba).

2. There should be no cost or minimal cost for opting out making it an accessible option for all residents regardless of income status.

3. The opt out options should be available when a resident moves to a new residence.

4. Page 15 of the report mentions the Winnipeg Poverty Reduction Strategy Alignment and how it is supported by the transition to Advanced Metering Infrastructure (AMI). There is failure to point out that without a fulsome affordable opt out program, people who are vulnerable will face further decline in health from inescapable radiation in or on their homes, may be unable to work due to it, may be made homeless with the challenge of finding suitable housing, and be burdened financially if they are low income and can't afford the opt-out. This infrastructure, if made mandatory, could contribute to the poverty crisis.

5. A clear, stable, and comprehensive opt out program is not yet brought forth. Page 12 states, *"Details of an Opt-Out Program will not be known until the water meter and related technology specifications are selected…Business processes and costs are being reviewed as part of the AMS project and are subject to change."* Residents deserve clarity and transparency before this goes through, and an opt out option that is not subject to change.

6. Page 12 states, "*The following is a general outline of how an Opt-Out Program might work: The Opt-Out Program would be limited to customers at specific premises at the time the AMS project is implemented at that premises. Once the resident vacates the premises, an AMI meter would be installed in order to restart the service. The City would not retrofit existing AMI meters with non-AMI meters.*"

   So according to the general outline, if someone moves, even if they qualify with a medical letter, they would not be able to get a non-emitting meter. It could be impossible, or at least

very difficult for these individuals, to find suitable housing in Winnipeg. This is overly limiting and too rigid.

7. The staff are catering to the technology vendors and not being firm on what will benefit Winnipeg residents who are vulnerable.

8. The staff have provided some information but not a full costing or how they arrived at the numbers.

   Page 12 of the report states, *"It is important to note that an absence of fees for an Opt-Out Program may lower participation in the AMS program, thereby reducing operational efficiencies, data accuracy, and related savings. The absence of fees would also require the costs associated with operations to be incorporated into utility rates for all customers, estimated at* ***$235,000 to $252,000 annually*** *(2025 fees). The estimate excludes costs for modifications to the billing system to accommodate an Opt-Out Program."*

   Page 11 states, *"The estimated participation rate of an Opt-out Program is* ***0.1 percent to 0.2 percent of 221,000 meters."***

   This calculates out as follows:

   $235,000 divided by 221,000 households is $1.06/household/year.

   $252,000 divided by 221,000 households is $1.14/household/year.

   If the "profit" margin is really so thin that an extra charge for the opt-out of $1.06 to $1.14 will cause undue hardship, I believe the City needs to rethink the whole project. Especially with the recent tariffs and associated supply chain issues.