July 6, 2025: For the Executive Policy Committee – City of Winnipeg

Mayor Gillingham and Members of the Executive Policy Committee: Councillors Browaty, Duncan, Eadie, Lukes and Santos,

My name is Marie LeBlanc and I support Recommendation 1 under Item 5. Opt-out Program for the Advanced Metering System:
"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."

Please amend this recommendation to establish and expand the Opt-out program to reduce barriers for those with disabilities and prevent people from needing to leave their homes because of wireless radiation being emitted by smart water meter. Also, a medical letter from any Canadian medical doctor (not just Manitoba) should be acceptable.

I am originally from Manitoba. Because of my environmental sensitivities my Winnipeg medical doctor referred me to a medical doctor in Alberta. During the time I was in Alberta I lost my Manitoba provincial disability. It took 2 years to get on Alberta disability. During this time, I did a lot of going from place to place trying to get away from triggers such as smart meters desperately searching for a place to call home. When I could not find a place to live without getting sick, my Alberta doctor recommended I take my van to the US in the winter, so I don't freeze to death in the Canadian cold.
My van is where I live. I would rather live in a van that in a place that makes me sick. This is not a glamourous lifestyle. I miss my family and friends in Manitoba.

As a person with environmental sensitivities including electromagnetic hypersensitivity knowing what it is like to go from one Province to another, I ask that you make an amendment to the current proposed Opt-out program.

Why are only doctors from Manitoba allowed to write a medical note to opt out? I can speak from personal, lived experience that Manitoba doctors referred me to out of province because they could not find the medical expertise in Manitoba. Limiting medical letters to Manitoba does an injustice to those who have had to go elsewhere for appropriate diagnosis and health care.

Many with various illnesses including environmental sensitivities have a hard time obtaining medical letters let alone having a doctor who will apply for the disability tax credit. This creates another hurdle the sick person has to face. For those unable to obtain a medical letter would you consider them on a case-by-case basis to opt out? Many cannot afford to see a doctor out of province due to finances, a long waiting list, they are very ill and other reasons. Some have already lost their primary residence and drained financial resources.

For those who had to go out of province to obtain a medical diagnosis wouldn't you feel it is fair they are allowed to use the medical information from the out of province doctor? I am having a hard time understanding why the patient who had to go out of province from a province who had no doctor in that expertise be forced to have a smart meter because their valid diagnosis is not valid in Manitoba in relation to the advanced metering system.

Many people are not aware that wireless smart meters can impact their health. In the past I stayed at a place that had a smart meter. I became very sick. Some of my symptoms included swelling in my abdomen, excruciating pain, and many issues with my cognitive function, head pain and migraines to name a few. It turned out that there was a smart meter on the other side of the wall where I had my head when sleeping. I got a Trifield EMF meter and measured the areas in the house. The meter scientifically verified the areas that I claimed as an issue.

My family is in Manitoba and if I were to move back and find a suitable home, it could be difficult for me to find a medical doctor to write a letter to get an opt-out. I would also not likely to be able to afford the fees for the Opt-out.

I use this story, as my story is the story of many in Manitoba, Canada and the world. I would like to urge you to watch my short film. The short film Multiple Chemical Sensitivity and Environmental Awareness and Acknowledgement has won several awards, honorable mention, nominated and selected in film festivals in places including the USA, Athens, Greece and Romania. The film was displayed at the Canadian Museum for Human Rights fall of 2022 and Mentoring Artists for Women's Art (MAWA) in Winnipeg featuring stories from people living with Environmental Sensitivities also known as Environmental Illness. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xlmDrJYswxA

Many are suffering needlessly. Many live a life of isolation without supports, while some consider Medical Assistance in Dying. Please do not add more barriers for those seeking low wireless radiation areas. Instead, expand the eligibility of an Opt-out Program to physicians across Canada, not just Manitoba and make considerations for those who cannot obtain a medical note. It is an easy thing to do and would help many.

Marg Friesen of the Environmental Health Association of Manitoba can further explain why this is important.

By approving this recommendation, you will prevent others from becoming homeless.

Thank you.

Marie LeBlanc

PS. I have attached my submission of November 23, 2023, which has some additional information.

November 21, 2023

Mayor Gillingham and City of Winnipeg Councillors

Subject: Low income earners need no-cost opt outs with no extra documentation for Winnipeg's proposed smart water meters

Hello my name is Marie LeBlanc. I am disabled because of environmental sensitivities, which includes electrical sensitivities, multiple chemical sensitivity, and mold illness. This project has direct implications for the poverty reduction strategy. I want to let you know that it is important to make people aware they can opt out, and it is important to prevent driving others into poverty that there can be a no-cost to this option without a medical letter. It would be even better to have an opt-in choice for people who want the meter.

As a person disabled because of environmental sensitivities including electrosensitivity this subject is close to my heart. I am originally from Manitoba. Because of my environmental sensitivities my Winnipeg doctor referred me to a medical doctor in Alberta who specializes in this condition. I know I am speaking for others in Winnipeg. I have chosen to speak out whereas others remain silent not wanting to jeopardize whatever precarious housing and support they have.

In the past, when I knew nothing about "smart meters" I stayed at a place where I started to feel very sick. Some of my symptoms included issues with my cognitive function, migraines, abdominal issues and excruciating pain and problems sleeping.

After exploring many potential causes it turned out that my head when in bed was very close to a smart meter. I eventually got a TriField EMF meter and verified objectively that electromagnetic field levels were high in this area.

In order to have the smart meter removed I needed a medical letter which I did provide. After some negotiating between the person who owned the place and the company in charge of the smart meters, it was decided to remove the smart meter. Apparently, there was going to be a fee to have the meter read by a person. This was a long and difficult process. This would discourage many people.

I would like to ask that if our only choice is to live where there are smart water meters that we have the option to opt out without an additional cost with no requirement for a medical letter. Many people with medical conditions, including electrical sensitivity, are on disability and others have low incomes and cannot afford additional costs. Putting smart water meters in dwellings will greatly limit choices for housing for those who are made ill by exposure to this type of wireless radiation. Others who have these smart meters in their homes may become ill and will never know why. Maybe you have a friend, co-worker or family member who has become sick without any explanation. Many more people may become homeless.

For me, my only option to survive is to live in my modified van and seek clean air in the desert in the winter and migrate back to Canada in the summer. I have lived mostly out of my modified van for the last few years. I have chosen to be houseless because I would rather have the option to feel better living out of my medically modified van than being sick indoors. I cannot afford the type of housing required for me to have a better quality of life.

It is a hard life, not the glamorous few day camping trip others think this is all about. I have to be ready to flee on the turn of a dime. Someone may have a WiFi router, booster or smart meter near me when staying at a place by a house.

Those of us with environmental sensitivities feel much better when we have clean air, eat healthy non-polluted food, are in low electricity areas, can drink clean water and have a non-triggering source of keeping warm during the cold weather. In Snowflake Arizona a small community was formed. The government funded 4 houses for those living with Environmental Illness namely electrical sensitivities. It is a success and helps people live out their days with a safe place and better quality of life.

For the past few years, I have escaped the Canadian cold by driving south to Arizona to live in the dessert along with others like me. This may sound glamourous, but in fact it is not. It is a place of environmental refugees – many abandoned by friends and family who do not understand, and we are left without medical support. We are surviving – not thriving. We are the canaries- the early warning signs of danger that the world does not seem ready to act on. We are an inconvenient truth.

Along the way I have met many people without homes, some living in their cars without electricity, bathroom facilities, one or 2 pairs of clothes, no money, tired, weeping with no help who feel hopeless and helpless. Many explain how they are made sick by electricity, fragrances, mold, many who cannot find a supporting doctor, some who own their own house and cannot be in it and many who never knew there was a name to their medical condition. How many people are on the streets of Winnipeg with environmental sensitivities? Many don't want to mention it because of the stigma and judgment and ridicule. Many you never see in mainstream society.

I recall when I had an art projection about environmental sensitivities at The Forks in Winnipeg where a lady was crying because she was so happy she found someone she could talk to who would listen and understand her situation. I felt so helpless because there are no medical doctors in Winnipeg that I knew of who would take her condition seriously and provide appropriate care.

Here is a link to my 8 minute film **Multiple Chemical Sensitivity and Environmental Illness - Awareness and Acknowledgement**. The film has been displayed at the Canadian Museum for Human Rights and Mentoring Artists for Women's Art (MAWA) in Winnipeg and feature stories from people living with Environmental Sensitivities I have met along my journey. One individual lives in Winnipeg. The film has won several awards and was screened on November 17 at the Oral Histories of Environmental Illness symposium at the University of California, Los Angeles. The event was called **Canary Knowledge: Chronic Fatigue, Chemical Sensitivities and the Limits of Medicine.**

https://www.marieleblanc.net/new/films/mcseiaa/index.htm

I do not receive royalties or any payment when the film is shown. As you will see in the film people are needlessly suffering, and are living a life of isolation without supports. Some consider Medical Assistance in Dying. One Toronto woman with environmental sensitivities recently chose MAID because she could not find suitable housing.

I hope you will see the need to examine this issue more closely so that proper accommodations and arrangement can be made for people with this invisible disability and that organizations such as the Environmental Health Association of Manitoba and Electrosensitive Society based in Ontario be consulted along the way, should the smart water meter project using wireless radiation emitting equipment be approved.

Sincerely,

Marie LeBlanc

Email: www.marieleblanc.net (look at blog)

Additional information:

1. Main Environmental Health Clinics in Canada:
a) Women's College Hospital in Toronto, Ontario is a well respected clinic with expertise in this area.
https://www.womenscollegehospital.ca/care-programs/environmental-health-clinic/
b) Nova Scotia: http://www.cdha.nshealth.ca/environmental-health-centre

2. Woman with chemical sensitivities chose medically-assisted death after failed bid to get better housing
housinghttps://www.ctvnews.ca/health/woman-with-chemical-sensitivities-chose-medically-assisted-death-after-failed-bid-to-get-better-housing-1.5860579

3. FINAL REPORT OF THE TASK FORCE ON ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH December 2018
Care Now An Action Plan to Improve Care for People with Myalgic Encephalomyelitis/Chronic Fatigue Syndrome (ME/CFS), Fibromyalgia (FM) and Environmental Sensitivities/Multiple Chemical Sensitivity (ES/MCS)
http://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/public/programs/environmentalhealth/
https://www.ontario.ca/page/final-report-task-force-environmental-health

4. Incudes information on electrosensitivity **- Understanding & Accommodating People with Multiple Chemical Sensitivity in Independent Living** By Pamela Reed Gibson, Ph.D. James Madison University
https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&source=web&rct=j&url=https://www.ilru.org/sites/default/files/MCS%2520FINAL.PDF&ved=2ahUKEwjZtO6E16j_AhUZlWoFHQb6CFAQFnoECBIQAQ&usg=AOvVaw29-q1pmYg8MTkXbpsIP1qT
5. Environmental Health Association of Quebec (ASEQ)
https://aseq-ehaq.ca/en/

6. 2020 Consensus Statement of UK and International Medical and Scientific Experts and Practitioners on Health Effects of Non-Ionising Radiation (NIR)

https://phiremedical.org/2020-nir-consensus-statement-read/

7. The Medical Perspective on Environmental Sensitivities (commissioned by the Canadian Human Rights Commission) By: Margaret E. Sears (M.Eng., Ph.D.) May 2007
https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&source=web&rct=j&url=https://www.chrc-ccdp.gc.ca/sites/default/files/envsensitivity_en.pdf&ved=2ahUKEwi1k5Pv0aj_AhUTkWoFHem-CpkQFnoECAcQAQ&usg=AOvVaw0j7qZX8Ab6DwLre4LIlPma

8. Canadian Human Rights Commission: Policy on Environmental Sensitivities

Individuals with environmental sensitivities experience a variety of adverse reactions to environmental agents at concentrations well below those that might affect the “average person”. This medical condition is a disability and those living with environmental sensitivities are entitled to the protection of the Canadian Human Rights Act, which prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability…

https://www.chrc-ccdp.gc.ca/sites/default/files/policy_sensitivity_0.pdf

9. Electrosensitive Society
https://www.electrosensitivesociety.com/