

**CUPE LOCAL 500**

**RESPONSE TO**

**ASSINIBOINE PARK GOVERNANCE STUDY**



CUPE Local 500  
February 27, 2006

## Executive Summary

The report on the Assiniboine Park Governance Study provides a useful and focused overview of the organizational deficiencies, challenges and opportunities for the Park.

We appreciate the opportunity to have had input into the Study, and we look forward to working with the City officials and voluntary groups to assure the long term viability of the Park as a dynamic community resource. It must be noted however, that the consultants' commitment to keep the union informed during the development of the Study and to give the union an advance copy of the study were not done.

Through this response and future discussions to transform the administration, planning, and operations of the Park, the members of the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) Local 500 are prepared to play a formative role in the future of the Park.

As the union representing City workers involved in various aspects of the Park's maintenance and services, we are obviously interested in the labour management aspects of the study and proposed changes to the Park's governance. However, as a union, we have been an important part of the community for over 50 years and we also want to play a part in assuring public services remain available and attractive for Winnipeggers.

For many years the public and visitors have taken pride and pleasure in the park. It is a place where families can enjoy a picnic, toss a ball with friends, jog, cycle, or visit the zoo or conservatory. Connections run especially deep with the citizens of Winnipeg who tend to think of the park as their own. Therefore, any recommendations we make would be made to enhance public ownership.

We strongly encourage the City to adopt a governance model that assures the Park remains a public service and asset. The governance of the Park should be clearly kept within the mandate and authority of the City administration. We think a structure that encourages volunteer and community input, within a structure that provides the most efficient operational support will keep a balance that is needed.

As well, City monitoring and supervision of a Parks organization, will lead to security for investment, a clear vision for park development (as defined in the Framework Plan as well as other developments), checks and balances on vested interests, to assure the long term viability of the park.

In our opinion, Option I offers the greatest potential to meet the varied needs of the Park. In particular, it would assure the ongoing input of city operational services, which would work to the advantage of all partners involved in the functions of the Park. There is more to be done to coordinate and streamline these city departmental responsibilities and operations, but this can and will be done. One adjustment we would recommend, however, is that the new Parks structure report to a single line Department rather than EPC. In this way, both financial and operational commitments can be maintained efficiently and authoritatively.

Option II we believe goes too far to propose an independence that will undermine the ability of the city to provide operational support. If the Park is given to an independent Board, the City will not have the same ability to assure financial and operational controls.



Though the Study indicates that this option would give the voluntary groups greater flexibility in implementing their mandates, we believe that the security of operations would be undermined to the detriment of the voluntary agency partners. In other words, none of the current partners would benefit from this option.

## Comments on the Study Report

There are some aspects of the study that are of particular interest to the union. Overall we think the study reflects the current difficulties, resources and challenges the Park faces. However, there are a few additions we would suggest to the final report to reflect some of the issues and dimensions of the support that City workers provide the Park and will continue to provide.

### *SWOT Analysis*

In the strength section, there is reference to the professional staff, but not the support staff. We believe the skills, experience and commitment of the City's support workers is a very important strength and should be added to recognize their role in a revitalized Park governance.



The support staff have consistently provided quality assistance that has sustained the many functions of the Park. There has not been any indication that the services provided by City Staff are not up to expectation and the performance standards necessary for a world-class public facility.

Extremely important, the **staff have also provided support services beyond the strict definitions of their jobs**, especially at times of financial or organization stress. There have been a number of examples of individuals working beyond the expectations of their supervisors, as they were committed to assuring the completion of specific tasks or the quality of work required extra attention. For example, when an equipment storage shed was destroyed by fire last year, the workers continued their work regardless and in fact brought their personal tools to the Park until their regular equipment was available again.

### *Core Criteria*

While the study stresses the problems and deficiencies created by the lack of a coordinated and streamlined operations, there is very little to indicate correcting this level of planning is a core requirement. **We believe that streamlining the operational level of Park maintenance is more than 'operating cross-functionally within the park'**. It is an opportunity to assure continued public access to the Park through efficient and effective management of all the Park's resources.

We would suggest expanding this item or adding a new core criteria that ostensibly focuses attention on the need to structure operations to maximize the appropriate use of equipment, personnel and related services.

### *Figure 7 Matrix*



A Matrix of this nature is a useful summary and comparison of the different options for Park Governance. However, we think it is biased in favour of Option II.

First, Option II ranks high on the main criteria, if it is a totally stand alone enterprise, not when it is also inextricably linked to city provision of funding and operational services. As long as the Park is dependent on funding and servicing, it must meet the requirements of public accountability and therefore can not be ranked as high on the scale of the criteria used.

Similarly, Option I can be ranked higher on the scale according to the criteria used, if there is more efficient and therefore effective operations, and secured funding. We think the way the criteria are weighted in the matrix should indicate greater capacity for Option I in terms of being 'one entity', 'operating cross-functionally', and in 'revenue retention.'

## Specific Union Issues

It is very important to the city employees represented by CUPE, to see the clear commitment to respect the 'current labour agreement'. However, we think it important, and constructive to examining **how a change will be implemented** for the Park governance, to clarify other aspects of how city workers will be affected.

First, we think it wise to assure respect for current and **future labour agreements** with the unions involved. It would raise confidence in the unions if we knew that union representation will be maintained beyond the current agreements. While the description of the Stanley Park management recognizes the value of the unionized workforce, the description of the Calgary Park would not



encourage any unionized worker to have confidence in the Park's administration or the consultant's appreciation for union representation of workers.

Second, there are both **management and human resource issues** that will need to be clarified to make the governance structure work, and to assure union support. To reflect how we are approaching this study and the subsequent changes that will take place, some of the issues or questions the support employees are asking in this regard (particularly if Option II is adopted) include;



- who will be responsible for supervision and daily management of operations,
- how will employee performance be measured and treated where they are required to perform duties for and outside the Park,
- how will management functions be kept in check to avoid bloated administrative costs (it appears some Parks noted in the Study have developed large bureaucracies which we do not believe are needed in Winnipeg),
- if there is an independent Board, will it be constituted as a new and separate 'employer' (and therefore requiring a separate union certification),
- will there be job losses under the change and a new administration, and

- who will be responsible and able to recruit, hire and fire support staff working in the Park.

While some of the above are policy and structural in nature, other details of how these aspects of the Park's administration will be redefined will be worked out practically. We think the **workers should be involved** in these more detailed discussions of how these issues will be planned and implemented. In other words, our members are able and willing to contribute to planning how integration or cross-functional coordination will be done.

## Recommendations

In our opinion, **Option I offers the greatest potential to meet the varied needs of the Park**. The structural option that involves a balance of official and voluntary supports would give both partners the assistance and assets needed to maintain the park as a valued public facility.

In particular, Option I would assure the ongoing input of city operational services, which would work to the advantage of all partners involved in the functions of the Park. There is more to be done to coordinate and streamline these city departmental responsibilities and operations, but this can and will be done.

It is worth noting, that many of the issues identified as problematic in the study were the result of a restructuring of Park services less than 10 years ago. Until 1997, Parks



operation was under the auspices of one single City of Winnipeg Department. The Parks and Recreation Department had been responsible for all city parks for 104 years. In October of that year, Winnipeg City Council approved an amended version of the 'Cuff Report' which recommended the restructuring of the operational organization of the City of Winnipeg. This had a dramatic effect on parks operations in terms of planning, programming and maintenance. All three of these functions were transferred partially or wholly to the different line departments that we see today: the Community Services, Planning Property and Development and Public Works Departments.

In 1997, one of the reasons used to justify the restructuring was the lack of funding for the former Parks and Recreation Department. It was thought that by streamlining the operation more dollars could be directed to front line services. Of course this has been proven a falsehood as no such efficiencies emerged and in fact there has been less real dollars directed to the park over this past eight years.

One adjustment we would recommend however is that the new Parks structure report to a single line Department rather than EPC. In this way, both financial and operational commitments can be maintained efficiently and authoritatively. At this time, either Public Works or Community Services could house the coordinated and restructured Assiniboine Park services, until a full examination of which Department could be most appropriate.



We do not agree that Option II is the preferred governance structure. **Option II, we believe, goes too far to propose an independence that will undermine the**

**ability of the city to provide operational support.** If the Park is given to an independent Board, the City will not have the same ability to assure financial and operational controls. Though the Study indicates that this option would give the voluntary groups greater flexibility in implementing their mandates, we believe that the security of operations would be undermined to the detriment of the voluntary agency partners. In other words, none of the current partners would benefit from this option.

Therefore, we would encourage the City to adopt a governance model that assures the Park remains a public service and asset. **The governance of the Park should be clearly kept within the mandate and authority of the City administration and therefore kept as a totally public resource.** We think a structure that encourages volunteer and community input, within a structure that provides the most efficient operational support will keep a balance of assets that is needed.

This report prepared by:  
Canadian Union of Public Employees – Local 500  
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\* Note: The employees in the photos used in this report work within Assiniboine Park.