



For immediate release

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**JOINT RELEASE: CUPE 500, ATU 1505, WAPSO
Civic unions call on Mayor Bowman to postpone budget due to COVID-19**

WINNIPEG – Civic unions representing the majority of Winnipeg’s municipal workforce are calling on City Council to immediately postpone all upcoming committee hearings, as well as the upcoming special budget meeting of City Council.

“Pushing through an austerity budget in the middle of a health pandemic without full public consultation is wrong,” said Gord Delbridge, President of CUPE Local 500. “Expecting citizens to appear before public committee hearings, while the health authorities are calling for social distancing doesn’t make sense. Now is a time when we all need to work together to flatten the curve – and that includes postponing these kinds of meetings.”

Committee hearings are taking place this week where members of the public can present their concerns with the budget. The budget presents extensive cuts to programs and services, including libraries, 311, municipal services, the Waverley Fleet, transit routes, the U-Pass, and supervisory and professional staff throughout the civic service.

"This is a budget that will cut back on bus & shelter cleaning, reduce bus service in some areas and eliminate the wildly successful U-Pass program for post-secondary students," said Romeo Ignacio, ATU 1505 President. "We think it deserves greater scrutiny and Mayor Brian Bowman and his Executive Policy Committee (EPC) should immediately put this process on hold. Simply put, pushing this budget through in a time of crisis is irresponsible and is a major step backwards for our city when our collective focus should be on the crisis at hand."

“How can members of the public understand the impact of the budget when they cannot, and should not, be attending public meetings because of COVID-19?” added Richard Mahé, President of the Winnipeg Association of Public Service Officers (WAPSO), representing professional employees at the City of Winnipeg. “To push the budget through in this way is essentially ignoring the recommendations of public health officials and needlessly puts members of the public, city staff and elected officials at risk. The Mayor and Councillors need to postpone this process, and if that includes asking the Premier to hold any inhibiting legislation, then that call needs to be made today.”

The Canadian Union of Public Employees is Canada’s largest union representing more than 700,000 members. In Manitoba, CUPE represents approximately 37,000 members working in health care facilities, personal care homes, school divisions, municipal services, social services, child care centres, public utilities, libraries and family emergency services.

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