

## **After Pressure from WAPSO and Allies, City of Winnipeg Increases Protections**

WAPSO/IFPTE Local 162 joined other civic unions on Monday, March 16<sup>th</sup> in calling for a public postponement of the annual budgetary hearing meetings.

“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 Councilors 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.”

Despite the statement, the city continued to proceed with public hearings, but enlisted distancing measures to ensure low transmission. The hearings were held on March 18<sup>th</sup>. That same day, the City of Winnipeg released updates regarding working from home protocols and supports for non-essential employees. Local 162 found these measures insufficient and unevenly distributed across the various departments.

On March 20, the city increased the capacity for working from home for non-essential workers and further suspended interactions with the public. These protocols came on the same day as the province of Manitoba declared a State of Emergency in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. WAPSO will continue to monitor the situation.

The Local has closed its offices and is encouraging its members to reach out to staff electronically.