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| TITLE: Poverty Committee Report | |  |
| PRESENTER: Councillor G. Rice | AGENDA NO: | |
| CITY COUNCIL: | DATE: November 25 th , 2005 | |
| CLEARANCES: NIL | ATTACHMENTS: 1. Report (# of pages = 1) | |
| APPROVALS: | | |
| <p>_____</p> <p>G. Rice, Councillor Date</p> | | |

SUMMARY OF HISTORY/DISCUSSION & FUNDING:

The Poverty Committee has on several occasions discussed existing employment standards and its impact on low income families living in the community. Employment Standards laws and regulations have not had a detailed review since the 1970's. Manitoba's workplaces and the processes used in them have transformed dramatically in that time. The review will look at increasing flexibility and modernizing protection, coverage and compliance to reflect the realities of the modern economy, the changing face of today's labour force and the demands of today's families.

The Employment Standards Review Committee will hear submissions from community groups, individuals and other stakeholders in Brandon on Wednesday, December 7th, 2005 from 12:00 pm to 6:30 pm in Classroom "A" at the Agricultural Extension Centre, 1129 Queens Avenue. The Poverty Committee requests the opportunity to convey to the committee how existing standards are impacting low income families living within the City of Brandon.

RECOMMENDATION:

That the Poverty Committee be authorized to make a presentation to the Employment Standards Review Committee on December 7th, 2005 with respect to the impact of existing employment standards on low income families living in the City of Brandon in accordance with the points outlined in the attachment to the report of the Poverty Committee dated November 25th, 2005.

Points Intended To Be Presented To The Employment Standards Review Committee:

- Last review in the 1970's – time to come up to modern day standards.
- Improve as far as protection and compliance. Protect vulnerable workers through tougher compliance.
- Standardize hours of employment and overtime provisions, ie earning hours at premium rate but paid out at straight time.
- Independent contractors have no benefits – employees hired under contract so that employer is not required to pay benefits.
- Legislation from the '70's requires paid breaks every 5 hours - should be at least every 3 hours.
- After 1 full year of employment employees are entitled to 2 weeks paid vacation. Legislation should be amended to allow employees to take 1 week paid vacation after 6 months employment for a total of 2 weeks vacation for the 12 month period.
- General holidays – August Civic holiday and Boxing Day are not considered general holidays. The existing legislation which requires that employees work a minimum of 15 days during the 30 days prior to a general holiday should be repealed.
- Increase number of Employment Standards Officers and Inspectors – when these jobs become vacant in rural Manitoba the positions are not being replaced. Employment Standards Officers and Inspectors are considered front line workers in the protection of workers rights.
- Severance pay of 1 week per year should be part of the Manitoba Employment Standards Act. Currently here in Manitoba employees have to take the employer to court when faced with severance pay issues as it is strictly a standard of the Federal Employment Code.
- Construction industry needs its own employment standards act. 1991 was the last time the construction industry wages were reviewed. Construction is a unique industry that deserves its own act in relation to employment standards.
- Farm worker benefits are currently voluntary. Some aspects of farming, such as long hours, are part of the industry. Employment standards coverage needs to be extended to include agricultural workers, domestic workers, commission paid salespersons and dependant/independent contractors.
- Part time/casual workers should have pro-rated employment standards coverage or benefits.
- Employees experiencing unjust dismissal should have an automatic right to a Labour Board hearing.

**GARTH RICE, COUNCILLOR
SOUTH CENTRE WARD NO. 6**

Phone: (204) 727-3994 Fax: (204) 729-0975 [E-mail:ricefamily@westman.wave.ca](mailto:ricefamily@westman.wave.ca)
City of Brandon 410 - 9th Street Brandon, Manitoba R7A 6A2 www.brandon.ca

January 9th, 2006

Secretary
Employment Standards Code Review
614-401 York Avenue
Winnipeg, Manitoba
R3C 0P8

Dear Sir or Madam:

The City of Brandon Poverty Committee has been researching and discussing the possibility of a health benefits package for the working poor. We are aware that people on social assistance have health costs paid. People who work at jobs where there are benefits have various levels of coverage. People outside of these two categories have to pay out of pocket or purchase a personal health insurance policy. Low income workers find both choices difficult and often avoid visiting the dentist or getting new glasses, etc. because they can't afford to bear the costs associated with these health services.

In researching how a plan could be implemented the key point appears to be that a large number of workers must participate to spread the risk. Those needing services will be eager to join and increase the risk for the insurer. This, in turn, would require high premiums to offset the costs and the plan would not be affordable for the people for whom it was designed to help. The apparent necessity for all to participate is a stumbling block for a group or community implementing a health benefits program successfully.

It is felt however, that the Province could create a program, and probably an extremely good one, by collecting premiums through employers in the same manner as they collect for workers compensation benefits. This would allow the risk to be spread over a large participant base. It would also allow portability of the program for the employee/employer. Both of these things are positive attributes towards the creation of such a plan.

You will notice that this letter is being copied to the Ministers of Health and Family Services & Housing and their local representatives, as we realize that there may be overlap with these departments.

Thank you for considering this proposal as part of your employment standards review.

Yours truly,

Councillor Garth Rice, Chair
City of Brandon Poverty Committee

c.c. Minister of Health
Minister of Family Services & Housing
Brandon Regional Health Commission
Employment & Income Assistance (Brandon)
Mr. John Peterson, Executive Director of EIA Programs Branch