



*The Ottawa-Carleton Public Employees' Union
Syndicat Ottawa-Carleton de la fonction publique*

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Transportation Committee chairwoman applauds union-led efficiencies

Switching to in-house contracts saves city hundreds of thousands of dollars

OTTAWA, Oct. 28, 2009 - Sometimes, even for a city, doing a job yourself is the best option. At Wednesday's meeting of the city's Transportation Committee, chairwoman and River Ward councillor Maria McRae, along with Public Works general manager John Manconi, thanked CUPE local 503 president Brian Madden and his team for encouraging the city to implement several cost-saving measures, in turn lessening its dependence on private contracts and labour.

CUPE 503, which represents municipal workers, played a large role in the creation of the Casual Labour Pool, meant to reduce costs related to the city's use of private contractors and provide timely access to resources to meet peak demands, such as winter sidewalk plowing. The initiative was outlined during the committee's 2010 Budget Estimate Briefing. Beginning in 2010, this efficiency represents an annual savings of \$250,000.

"503 has a huge knowledge of front-line services," said McRae. "The workers and the union are working closer with management, and when people work together for a common goal, it will be a success." McRae added how pleased she was at tabling the new budget, which featured a negligible tax increase of 0.56 percent "without cutting core services."

Manconi echoed McRae's sentiments, saying the creation of a labour pool to offset costs meant "automatic savings" for the city. "We're excited with the support we're receiving from CUPE," said Manconi.

Another money-saving initiative spearheaded by CUPE 503 was the recent change in the city's graffiti-removal services. Following the approval of the city's Graffiti Management Strategy in 2007, removal services in three of Ottawa's four geographic areas were contracted out to private crews who would supplement the city's single graffiti crew. Earlier this year, after a review by CUPE 503 and the Surface Operations Branch, a report to the Transportation Committee and council recommended increasing the number of city graffiti crews from one to two, thus allowing services to one of the three contracted-out areas be brought in-house, at a savings of \$60,000.

Further efficiencies of \$100,000 were also identified in the city's Real Property Asset Management Branch (RPAM). These two efficiencies contributed to the Public Works overall efficiency target of \$5.1 million in 2009.

"They've been outstanding," said Manconi of 503's role in the Graffiti Management Strategy. "Yes, we're saving money, but we're also building a relationship with the community and councillors with fast response times," adding that other cities have been calling Ottawa to learn more about their streamlined mode of operation.



McRae said, "By returning services in-house, we can count on 503 to follow us and make sure we get the best service."

Madden is proud of the work his team has done, saying, "The savings being passed on to the taxpayers are significant. This type of cooperation demonstrates the commitment of the city workforce in building safe and healthy communities."