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Date: December 6, 2006

To: Community Social Services  
Supervisors – EIA and  
EIA Rural Program Managers

From: Wes Henderson, Acting Executive Director  
Adult and Children's Programs, and

Louis Leclerc, Acting Executive Director  
Employment and Income Assistance Programs

Telephone:

Subject: EIA Participants with Unread Water Meters in City of Winnipeg (city issue only)

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It has been brought to our attention that many water bills paid directly by Employment & Income Assistance (EIA) have been based on estimated usage for over one year. Not having regular actual readings of water usage may lead to undetected water leaks as well as challenges in determining the portion of the water bill that is the responsibility of EIA. As a case in point, a large bill of over \$20,000 was recently identified by City of Winnipeg Water Works. The reason for the unusually high water bill was an undetected water leak. Fortunately, the City of Winnipeg Water Works advised the EIA Program of a one time adjustment program for customers with unusually high water bills which allowed the bill to be adjusted to under \$1,000.

Services for Persons with Disabilities (SPD), Finance & Administration, Employment Income and Housing and Service Delivery Support (SDS) met to discuss ways in which the risk of excessive water bills can be limited and develop a process to ensure that water bills are read.

The City of Winnipeg provided EIA with a list of participants on direct payment who have not had their water bills read in over one year. Each EIA office will be sent the cases that are managed out of their office. (The EIA program may request an updated list on an ongoing basis). EIA staff are requested to:

- Review each case on the list and provide clear direction to the participant to make arrangements to have the water meter read (before next benefit month cut off if possible) so it does not negatively impact the release of their next benefit cheque.
- Create a Bring Forward (BF) in SAMIN to ensure a reading was completed by the city.

Once the reading has been completed, the City of Winnipeg will

- Send an "actual bill" to FSH Finance & Admin area.
- FSH Finance & Admin will pay the bill if the dollar value is reasonable.
- If the bill is unusually high they will not pay the bill and will contact the Case Coordinator who is expected to contact the participant to inquire as to why the bill is high and take appropriate steps to address the issue.
- If the bill is legitimately the responsibility of the participant and not EIA, the Case Coordinator is to advise the participant to contact the City of Winnipeg regarding their One Time Adjustment Program at 986-5858 to request an adjustment.