



LOCAL 7201
AFL-CIO



Communications Workers of America

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Dear St. Paul City Council,

I am the President of Communications Workers of America Local 7201 representing approximately 650 members working for CenturyLink in St. Paul and the surrounding suburbs.

I am writing to express my deep concern regarding the council's approval of the Franchise Renewal Committee's recommendation to negotiate an agreement with Ramsey County for dark fiber on the county owed network.

CenturyLink currently has customers such as the St. Paul School District which are serviced by members of the Communications Workers of America Local 7201. These members enjoy a high salary and good benefits, when CenturyLink loses customers we lose members and St. Paul businesses lose customers. We have seen a significant decline in our membership since divestiture in 1984. We understand this outcome in the face of more deregulation and competition, however it is unacceptable when the competition is government owned and facilitated.

I'm also concerned about the limits for users of this network. My understanding is that one report stated that this 110 mile network will go within 1 mile of many businesses. The implication is that there is a potential to subsidize the Ramsey County Network by allowing private parties to connect to the network; further eroding the customer base of CenturyLink thereby threatening even more jobs.

I am also concerned about the funding for building the Ramsey County Network. My understanding is that federal stimulus money was secured for this purpose. These dollars were not set aside for government entities to overbuild existing networks and compete with established providers. Currently the Governors Broadband Task Force is formulating recommendations to the legislature to bring about ubiquitous broadband connectivity in Minnesota. Broadband stimulus money is intended for geographic areas where no infrastructure exists. This limited supply of money can do a lot of good for many Minnesota

citizens who currently are unserved and underserved due to a lack of facilities. St. Paul already has several incumbent providers of Broadband.

I inquired why CenturyLink did not participate in the RFP. I was told that the RFP was written in a way that disadvantaged incumbent providers, and as a consequence our members were also disadvantaged.

Although the Company has changed hands since Northwestern Bell's existence CWA represented workers have occupied the building on Kellogg and St. Peter for well over 60 years. The building has been more than a prominent place on the St. Paul skyline. It has always been a source of revenue for the city and its businesses, good jobs for its citizens, and committed service to the community.

In recent years we have been downsized by technology, the economy, and other market forces. I'm asking you to reconsider your support of this recommendation because it is likely to cause the further erosion of good jobs that exist today in St. Paul.

Steve Lewsader
President
CWA Local 7201