The Herald, Sept. 28 edition

Kelvin closure decision bizarre and unfair
by Bernice Pontanilla

It is sad to see a decade-worth of community revitalization go down the toilet, but that is exactly what is happening in Elmwood with the closing of Kelvin Community Centre.
After following the debate over the closure of Kelvin these last few months, I have decided to take a stand on this issue.
Because of the way this took place. Because there was a lack of proper consultation with the community. Because taking a stand is the right thing to do.
According to the majority of city council members and the General Council of Winnipeg Community Centres, they support the Kelvin closure because children and teens in that area can head east to Chalmers community club or head north to the soon-to-be new and improved Bronx Park community centre.
This is where the problem of people making decisions for areas they know nothing about comes into play.
Kelvin serves a very specific catchment area that includes the community of Glenelm, which has one of the highest concentrations of young families.
Bronx Park is located more than 20 streets away from Hespeler Avenue not a short three blocks away.
And no parent in Glenelm would ever let their child walk down Johnson Avenue to get to Chalmers.
Why? Because the child would have to walk down a stretch of street (Levis) that has an open field on one side, a strip mall of businesses that shuts down at 5 p.m. every day, nearby transitional youth/halfway housing, and past a parking lot where only 10 years ago, a young man was shot to death.
You can hardly blame residents for being concerned about the welfare of their children.
The fact is that if the General Council was really looking at what is right for the entire community, Bronx Park would absorb the catchment area of Melrose Park Community Centre.
This is what makes sense, even though the club recently celebrated its 50th anniversary and is once again thriving, because it is located only three blocks east of Bronx Park.
Every single community club in the area has had ups and downs.
I know this not from second-hand information or because Kelvin supporters are trying to persuade me.
It is because I grew up in this area and witnessed firsthand how kids registered for sports at one club and ended up playing for teams in North Kildonan as there weren't enough to form Melrose, Bronx Park, Chalmers or Kelvin teams.
The community of west Elmwood has worked hard to bring businesses and more families back to the area.
The next step was to provide the much-needed recreational and social services, which could have been done by Kelvin.
In an April 22, 2005, press release, Mayor Sam Katz promised there would be no forced closures of community centres in Winnipeg they would be encouraged to amalgamate.
Now residents in west Elmwood know exactly what the Mayor's words are worth.