Good Morning

Honorable Mayor, Councillors, Ladies and Gentlemen.

Thank you for providing me with the opportunity to share with you the success and positive impact of the North End School Resource Officer (SRO) Program and to advocate for your support and expansion of this highly effective crime fighting strategy.

My name is Dushant Persaud, former Principal at two North End Schools *(Isaac Newton and St. Johns)* and current principal at the Winnipeg Adult Education Centre. It was indeed a privilege, representing the Winnipeg School Division in collaboration with the Police and the Province, to introduce the School Resource Officer Program to the North End of Winnipeg where three SRO's are currently based out of three high schools and serve fifteen schools.

The process to implement the School Resource Officer Program in 2001 was challenging, not only from a funding perspective but also a challenge conceptually. We needed a paradigm shift that looked at fighting crime, promoting peace and neighbourhood safety and enhancing relationships between youth and police are accomplished in a pro-active manner and that the School Resource Officer Program is an extremely effective strategy to accomplish these goals.

My purpose here today is to affirm and assure you that the School Resource Officer Program is not only an over-whelming success in its stated agenda, but has proven far more effective than we anticipated.

Evaluation findings at the end of the Pilot Project in 2005 showed that:

- SRO Project builds credibility and trust of the Police by youth. This is particularly significant as many of our youth's initial contacts historically with Police tend to be negative.

- SRO's are to be creditied for the enhanced positive relationship between police, schools and the community.

- Parents actively seek out SRO's for assistance. In fact, parents regularly phone our schools and request that the SRO provide mediation on intervention involving their children.

- Business owners overwhelmingly think SRO's are beneficial. They report less mischief and crime especially graffetti, less loitering , theft/shop-lifting and less vandelism.

- Students report less bullying/violence in schools and school yards.

- Students report feeling safer in schools and playgrounds.

I can share with you that many potentially serious situations were averted due to the trust and respect that our students developed with our SRO's. Three examples that best examples the respect and trust that can develop between SRO's are:

1. ~~At one of the High Schools~~, graduating students chose that the SRO as the individules they wanted to address their convocation. The students identified her as someone who earned their respect for her commitment to support them.

2. One late evening, a couple of years ago, a group of youth in the backlane was asked to leave the area by an older lady. The verbal exchanges between the group and the old lady became heated, and one of the young people who had a piece of wood, threatened to hit the old

lady. Fortunately, another youth intervened with the statement that they should leave as "Constable Quaill,one of the SRO's, was not going to be impressed if they hit the old lady." The group left the area. This story was related to the SRO and the school by the old lady.

3. SRO's played a significant role after a fatal shooting of a youth by the Police. They were able to successfully get other angry youth and observers away from the immediate scene and get accurate witness accounts. One lady insisted that she would only provide her witness account to a particular SRO, someone she trusted through earlier contact at her child's school.

   School Resource Officers are the most respected police Officers in the North End and young people regularly seek them out for advice and to provide them with information. One of the visible successes since the SRO Program began, is the reduction of graffiti and petty vandalism in areas where SRO's work – an indication that young people are becoming more respectful of their neighbourhoods.

SRO Parent base

Parent's confidence that our schools are safer with the presence of SRO's has resulted in families opting to keep their children in their community schools, rather than bus them to other schools outside of their neighbourhoods. This builds community as families opt to stay in the neighbourhoods and youth leaders stay in their neighbourhood schools.

It is very important for us to recognize that the use of SRO's is a Pro-active strategy that is paying immediate dividends as noted above, with the long term effect of turning today's youth into respectful, law abiding citizens. The SRO Program has proven to be a win-win situation for all stakeholders: Police, Justice, schools, youth, families, business and the community and I strongly urge you to maintain where it exists and expand it so that other communities can benefit.

Once again, thank you for the opportunity to share with you the highly effective and successful SRO Program in the North End.

D Persaud