*** Mayor Katz & City Councillors. - I am just an ordinary citizen but I am here to make a statement for the Labour Election Comm. & myself

My name is Cheryl-Anne Carr and today I'm speaking on behalf of the Labour Elections Committee, which is being revived from its 16 year state of dormancy because of the tremendous importance of the next two years for the City of Winnipeg, for working families and small businesses.

Our history goes back to the election of Wm. Kolisnyk (Ko Lis Nek) in 1926, a staunch advocate for public sector workers. We were called the Workers' Election Committee at that time, and since then elected councillors and school trustees on a regular basis - Jacob Penner, Joe Zuken, Peggy Chun and Mary Kardash to name a few.

The City of Winnipeg budget unveiled on March 6 does not have the cuts and privatizations many groups expected. Community groups and the Winnipeg Labour Council were prepared for a giant battle to block the closures, cuts and privatizations.

The expectations come from both the platform Mayor Sam Katz campaigned for in 2004, to eliminate the business tax, and the recommendations of the Economic Opportunity Commisssion which offered up a shopping list of drastic privatizations and cuts to community services.

The proposed EPC budget was to break even this year, but for the next two years it anticipates enormous deficits. These deficits open the door for huge cuts to services. Thankfully, the business tax is maintained in the next two budgets, but if the business tax is eliminated these deficits would balloon,

well above $100 million per year.

The LEC disagrees with many measures proposed in this year's budget. For example, we believe it is possible to maintain staff levels and gain new sources of revenue. The City should look at the tax exemptions granted True North, private owners of the MTS Centre, since the company violated the its agreement with the Stagehands Union to transfer staff and certification from the old publicly-owned Winnipeg Arena.

Chopping the business tax would be completely irresponsible in the current situation with looming large deficits, and the Labour Election Committee proposes that Mayor Sam Katz and the Executive Policy Committee adopt a different approach.

The neo-liberal measures recommended by Mayor Katz's task force are still alarming to

many organizations, and they must not be carried out.

Large turn-outs at town halls organized by the Winnipeg Labour Council are a sign of strong opposition against cuts and privatizations. Winnipeg Is Not For Sale, another group, is planning to hold a rally on budget day at City Hall on Wednesday, March 26 at 8:30 a.m.

The Labour Election Committee hopes that these activities demonstrate that the people of Winnipeg do not want to chop the business tax and that they want to retain services!

We propose that the City Council instead support a different approach to resolve the deficit, based on the following two measures.
- a unified demand to the provincial and federal governments to increase operating

revenues for municipalities, increasing revenue sources such as a levy on gasoline sales.
- Secondly, it is time to remove education from the property tax, making it possible for municipalities to increase their share of existing property tax revenues - that would be the simplest way to ensure services are maintained at the civic level.

We warn against privatizations as a way to cut costs for taxpayers. Not only do privatized services reduce the quality of service and accountability, they increase costs to taxpayers in the long run because of the enormous profits taken from these services. Privatization is robbery of the public purse and theft of community services.

Finally, the Labour Election Committee believes that if Canada or Manitoba experiences an economic slowdown as many

expect could happen, that is all the more reason for spending to be maintained and even increased by and for cities. Winnipeg should expect more, not less, funding during an economic slowdown, as a way to compensate for the failures of the private sector, the public sector can help maintain jobs and consumer spending during an economic crisis.

In closing, the LEC is dedicated to ensure that the balance of forces on City Council will support the interests of all workers and small businesses of Winnipeg. We sense that that balance needs to be adjusted, based on what we have seen so far. We will work in a united way with all interested parties in the next election to ensure that adjustment takes place. We believe a united approach to that task is necessary, and that how this City Council deals with this and the upcoming budgets will be crucial tests on how we proceed to shift the balance in favour of

workers and small businesses.

My personal reflections

My family started watching a mini series last night I am sure you've heard of …about the life of John Adams the second president of the United States……he is shown saying 2 things I found fascinating….he said emphatically that the area known as Massachusetts was his country…..and at the first continental congress he captivated his audience by listing those god-given rights he found inalienable…namely air and water, but also housing, food and to paraphrase him…work…..this took my imagination because as a Red River Metis this area we are occupying is my country….and I too find these things inalienable to all people…. and yet in this place.. my country …my people and many that share this area cannot say they are secure in these rights to food, housing and work and even air and water are becoming iffy…

This city has great wealth and it is in the hands of a few….the majority is living on credit and charity and borrowed time….this makes for very unhealthy conditions…conditions **you** have much control over and a moral obligation to do something about…

I totally take exception to the economic theories that would have you put more money into the hands of the rich in order to have them create work and prosperity for the rest of us….**this does not work and has never worked**….. what we need in this city is **job creation, accessible and affordable mass transit, accessible and affordable useful education, universal daycare, and decent housing workers can afford**……we need more books and materials in libraries that are accessible to everyone not just a few with cars and the gas to run them……we need public art programs and recreation areas with sports and arts that the people can be involved in…especially our children…..

Prepare a real plan to create work for real livable wages, do it by creating housing, transit, daycare and recreation and charge those who are best able to pay…..when we all can live as we are meant to live we can all share the burdens….but when the paper lists good jobs as "volunteer opportunities" we know that harder times lie ahead….when the only answer our city hall seems to have is make the rich richer and increase the police force to keep the workers in their place this is a shame and a blight on a city known for its generosity and caring…..

We won't need a larger police force if all the people can fully participate in society….countless studies have shown the single best way to keep families together, encourage education, and do away with crime is a decent standard of living….without this nothing works …..on Saturday I attended 2 rallies that saw our police force out bullying the populace who were doing nothing except exercising their democratic rights…..we do not need more of this….we need work to pay for the good things of life and to raise our families…..this council can set an example and move in the right direction instead of laying people off and cutting programs….do more …do better …do