Good afternoon. My name is Darrell Rankin and I'll be presenting the view of the Manitoba Committee of the Communist Party of Canada on the water utility proposal.

The Communist Party is a working class party dedicated to the goal of building a socialist society in Canada. We have been active in the fight ~~in the fight~~ against fascism and war and in support of jobs, unions, medicare and many other democratic rights since 1921. Several of our members have been elected to this City Council beginning in 1926, including the first communist in North America to be elected to public office.

Provincial political parties rarely comment on civic matters, but the proposal you are making to remove the water utility from your democratic control, to privatize a sizeable part of the service and to sell water to surrounding municipalities and customers is a matter of such importance that it would be an abdication of our responsibility to the working people of this city.

The proposal is profoundly undemocratic, not only how it would affect democratic control and scrutiny over the water utility, but on how you are trying to ram your proposal ahead regardless of the genuine concerns of the people of Winnipeg.

The issue was never raised as a serious matter during the last civic election. And there would be no need to spend a quarter million dollars to sell the proposal if the proposal could stand on its own merits.

Your apparent disregard for the concerns of people shows you have no respect for the people of Winnipeg; you are holding them in contempt. I stated at ~~the~~ a public meeting on Monday that leading members of this City Council are acting like a rogue state.

I am here to say that our Party will do everything we can to keep the water utility as a public operation within the City of Winnipeg. We have already urged that people protest the proposal and work to defeat any City Councilor voting in support of the measure.

As in many other issues, we recognize our small Party will never accomplish much on our own. But we fully support the many initiatives already underway to block your proposal, including the rally next Tuesday, July 21 at 7 p.m. in front of City Hall. We would welcome the support of the NDP to call an emergency session of the Manitoba Legislature to block the transfer of the water utility from the hands of the people of Winnipeg.

The faulty assumptions and the vast amount of missing information in the proposal itself are telling. They tell me that in the end this scheme will end up costing the people of Winnipeg an enormous amount of money. I'm not going to put a figure on how much, because I don't want to fall into the pattern you have

set where your proposed business plan makes exact but baseless promises. Your figures have no basis, as you have heard from earlier presenters.

But it is far more that money we are talking about here. What vision does your proposal reveal to people once we have dispensed with the golden promises you have made?

Your vision is one that will end development in Winnipeg and spur the development of land outside Winnipeg. It is a vision that will impoverish workers who will lose their jobs or be forced to accept lower wages in the privatized parts of the water utility.

Compared to the vision of Winnipeg City Council close to one hundred years ago to build an aqueduct and a public water utility, your proposal would create massive hardship, attack democratic control and all for what? For the benefit of a small handful of land speculators who dominate the market for developable land outside the City perimeter.

Your vision of development is puny compared to your predecessors. We see here a scheme for a small amount of progress outside the perimeter of Winnipeg at the expense of the large majority of people. It won't even benefit people living outside of Winnipeg very much because they will end up paying higher prices for monopolized land and suddenly is much more marketable.

It seems to me that the cost of any further progress under the present capitalist system is too high, it is a social system that can advance only slightly with tremendous cost to the large majority. Like how the U.S. is gaining access to Iraq's oil at the expense of millions of lives.

The proposal is completely against the interests of Winnipeg as a whole, it is against the protection of the rich agricultural land surrounding Winnipeg, it is against workers and their families.

In a statement released to the public and media, we are calling the proposal a monumental and undemocratic robbery.

We have one question we insist be answered if you intend to pursue the proposal. In fact, we would like to see the research done regardless. Who are the owners of the developable land in the area surrounding Winnipeg, what is the extent of their holdings (including the options they own), and how highly monopolized are these land speculators?

It would be honest and responsible of you to answer that question. Will we get a response?