Manitoba/Northwestern Ontario Synod www.mnosynod.org

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To: Members of the Executive Policy Committee, City of Winnipeg Council

Dear committee members,

My apologies for being unable to present this paper in person. Due to a clerical error, my name was omitted from the presentation list this morning during the committee meeting, even though a telephone confirmation yesterday indicated I was to be the 18th presentation of the day.

I would like to address two issues of concern to my constituency, which includes a significant community of 22,000 Lutherans associated with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada.

In 2006, at the request, initiative and leadership of our youth membership, our denomination developed an environmental policy which calls upon all people to be intentional in the care of our environment. Hence, the call to hold governments accountable for an effective change that reflects a care for our environment.

Our denomination also works closely in partnership with community groups to address issues of poverty, crime, youth advocacy, aboriginal issues, etc. If this mornings' steady parade of community groups coming to the committee meeting with concerns about funding changes and needs, then our concern about decreasing support of community groups is being expressed at an appropriate time. In fact, I am proud to say that seven Lutherans were leaders in six

presentations by community groups before you this morning. They are taking seriously their call to action and to work on behalf of others so that the world will be blessed.

My personal work takes me through many areas of Manitoba and Northwestern Ontario. I make my home in Winnipeg and when I return home after my travels, one of the first things I see is a sign welcoming me to Winnipeg, HEART OF THE CONTINENT.

What does this mean then to be the HEART OF THE CONTINENT? A reasonable assumption would be that Winnipeg is "at the centre" of the continent, because of course, we are located near the longitudinal centre of Canada. I believe it also can be assumed to represent a cultural and social reflection of who we are as a city- to have heart, to care, to have a depth to us that reflects that we care about our community and our world, that we have the capacity to care.

Manitoba, as you know, has the most charitable citizens in the country. We are a giving people, known for our heart, known for our care.

The city of Winnipeg is made up of neighbourhoods and, if asked, most people would tell you that they come from a specific neighbourhood. A great percentage would probably even say they still live in the same neighbourhood that they grew up in. That's what the heart of the city is about- neighbourhoods, communities.

When I read sections of the 2009 Operating Budget for the city I began to wonder how it reflects this social and cultural understanding of neighbourhood.

Here are some of the concerns expressed to me by our constituents.

In the grants section of the budget, it indicates that **three** million dollars will be given to True North Development, (I believe it represents the MTS centre); almost **half a million** to the Goldeyes baseball team. I noted that these two business did not require a voice at the table this morning.

A mere **$300,000** will be allocated to a large number of community groups throughout the city, not just downtown. How does this represent heart of the neighbourhood? How does this represent an understanding of what neighbourhoods mean for community building? How is it that "for- profit" groups should gain valuable financial support when it is a business, meant to make a profit. How is it that a mere $300,000 is given to communities which reach into the heart of our city- community based groups that provide a service to our city, such as the Spence Neighbourhood Association or the N'dinawe Youth Resources Centre, etc. How does refunding taxes to businesses help them become good corporate citizens that care for their surrounding communities? Isn't that a price to pay for moving into the neighbourhood?

This city needs community groups, neighbourhood groups who work for positive lifestyles, education and healthy living for the marginalized and poor of our city. This city relies on a very strong infrastructure of volunteerism that we cannot afford to lose. We need small groups and neighbourhood groups, people volunteering their time to make this a better place to live, meeting the needs of people and making an impact on our world. A budget of heart would reflect such a respect and value for our volunteers. A budget of heart would reflect people orientation, where service would be the centre of that heart.

The second issue I wish to raise in regards to the 2009 budget is that of the environment. A budget of heart would represent a care of the environment. Again, I fail to see where this council is addressing the issue of rapid transit, trying to get cars off of our streets, reducing our carbon footprint. A report in this budget indicates that 5 billion km of vehicle travel occurred in our city in 2007 in comparison to close to twenty seven million in Bus km.

The vehicle mileage is outrageous. It puts unmanageable demands on our roads and transportation system. It puts unmanageable demands on an aging system of transit which cannot even meet the needs of handicap citizens in the next five years. It is time this city bit the bullet and transitioned to a rapid transit system.

We must be leaders in encouraging all people to be good stewards of our environment and reduce our carbon footprints in the world. The development company which leases us our office space recently provided a recycling bin at the back of the premises. Our office has been located here for over twenty years. Why did it take this long for action? Leaders had to be motivated to make change. Leaders had to make behaviour changes in consumption habits in order for this to happen. I believe our civic and provincial government leaders also need to make behavioural changes and model for the ordinary citizen a need for reduction in consumption. It is time for us to take responsibility for our excesses and government can model this.

Recycling is also addressed in this operating budget. A key goal listed is to increase efficiency and effectiveness of our services. Where is there an indication that our city is doubling our recycling efforts? Sometimes recycling materials are just put in our landfill because it is costly to recycle. There are alternative ways to encourage recycling. Might I suggest the following, which I am sure you have heard before:

- Fees to reduce urban sprawl
- A commuter fee for those who live outside of the city
- Fees to encourage businesses to decrease tones of garbage that is in our landfills
- fees for those who leave too much garbage at our curbs, helping our citizens to reduce garbage in our landfills

We need to encourage recycling by hitting the pocketbooks of those who are not taking responsibility for environmental stewardship?

Finally, a budget of heart addresses community needs, not fear. We need to increase community resources to give healthy alternatives to young people. Three million over three years to extend the Aboriginal Youth Strategy is a start. A budget of heart is proactive rather than reactive. More dollars are needed to make a difference in the life of our young people.

The old saying that it takes a village to raise a child applies to our situation. It takes community neighbourhoods to grow healthy, mature, happy citizens. This operating budget needs to reflect such

an understanding. We are gifted with many groups and individuals who give of their time and talents to work in community. Let's reward them with an appropriate infrastructure that supports their efforts. And let's show, through this budget, that we mean to be a people of heart.

Thank you to the budget system for allowing me this time to reflect back to you the concerns of my community and the ones who work on our behalf to better the whole city.

Peace

Elaine Sauer

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