Submitted to EPC on May 21/03 by Vicki Burns. PM

MAY 21, 2003

PRESENTATION TO EXECUTIVE POLICY COMMITTEE

BAN WILD AND EXOTIC ANIMALS IN TRAVELLING ENTERTAINMENT EVENTS

Good morning and thank you for allowing us to speak to you about the issue of the use of wild and exotic animals in travelling entertainment events. I am here on behalf of The Winnipeg Humane Society , the primary animal welfare organization in Manitoba. We have 16,000 supporters , the majority of whom live in Winnipeg, and we believe that the majority of our supporters agree with the position that the use of wild and exotic animals in travelling entertainment events should be prohibited. I can state this with confidence as we have surveyed our supporters through our newsletter on 2 occasions in recent years and both times there was an overwhelming majority who expressed their desire to see this practice ended. Not only is this something that humane society members support but a growing number of Winnipegers are expressing their views as evidenced by this ad that appeared in the Winnipeg Free Press on April 30 of this year, an ad that was

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initiated by citizens of this city. I want to point out that there are 5 Wpg. veterinarians who have shown their support for this cause by adding their names to this list. I have also been told of a petition submitted to the mayor's office by a 12 year old girl . 2 years ago the WHS placed an ad in The Wpg. Free Press about the use of exotic animals at the circus and we were amazed to receive over 1200 responses, many from people who had no prior involvement with the humane society. I also want to remind you that twice in the past 18 months your standing committee on Protection and Community Services has voted to propose a bylaw prohibiting wild and exotic animals in travelling entertqinment events.

Why are so many people now reacting to the plight of wild and exotic animals like tigers and elephants at the circus? After all its been going on for almost 70 years here in Wpg. as we often hear from the Shriners. I can only liken it to a similar shift in values that occurred many years ago when it used to be commonplace to for humans with disabilities , like the elephant man, to be displayed as freaks at the circuses. Most people would now view that practice as completely abhorrent. The tide is turning now in a similar way regarding elephants and tigers at the circus. People are becoming increasingly aware of what a diminished and deprived life these animals

must endure. You'll hear from Rob Laidlaw much more about the specifics of the animal welfare concerns but let me just point out that the tigers for example are living almost entirely in cages barely bigger than a kitchen table, elephants are spending large parts of each day shackled together and when not shackled are confined in small barren concrete basements like our own arena where they may be able to move only a few yards in any direction, that is all. All because they are still wild animals, they are not meant to be travelling in circuses, their wildness means that they will always be a danger to humans and because of that they need to be restrained and confined.

I myself & WHS inspectors have seen the animals & have seen.

What message are our children getting from seeing these magnificent animals so far removed from their natural environment and doing tricks that are so unnatural – like tigers jumping through hoops of fire? It seems to me that they'll be learning that humans can force even the most powerful animals to do anything we want them to, using whatever means necessary. Just imagine what it must take to get any animal to jump towards fire? Its the complete opposite of the message of respect towards animals and the environment that many of us are trying to imbue in the next generation.

It is simply unethical to be causing animals to suffer the lifetime of deprivation and confinement that is an inherent part of circus life for them. It is so unnecessary. We often hear that it is a traditional part of an important fundraising event, the circus. In reality the circus is type of fundraising event where the profit margins are very low due to the high overhead of bringing 35 staff and performers and numerous trucks and equipment to each city. It has become such a controversial event that it carries high risks in many ways. Coming from an organization that is entirely reliant on fundraising and donations , I can tell you that if fundraising is the primary goal there are many other ways to raise much more money. If having a circus is the primary goal , then why not a circus without elephants and tigers. There are a growing number of human only circuses touring North America and drawing huge crowds.

I'd like to remind you of the huge expression of outrage from people all over North America about the plight of our Manitoba polar bears in the Suarez Circus in Puerto Rico. The public was demanding that something be done to rescue those poor bears from the sweltering heat and terrible conditions in which they were living,. Our own Manitoba government took the unprecedented move of bringing forward legislation which makes it illegal

for any polar bears from Manitoba to ever end up in circuses again. Why - for the very same reasons we are now asking you to prohibit wild animals from coming to our city. Because it is simply inhumane to allow any wild animal to have to live in the stressful , confined and unnatural circumstances involved in circus life .

WE are not asking you to do something which has never been done before. We are asking you to have the courage and the compassion to join the ranks of other cities across Canada, like Victoria, Vancouver, Windsor and St. John's Newfoundland, and around the world – entire countries like Denmark, Finland , Singapore. Here is a recent list of all the cities, municipalities and countries where exotic animal acts have been banned.

We are asking you, our elected leaders, to demonstrate moral and ethical leadership by enacting a by law here in Wpg. which will prohibit wild and exotic animals being brought here in travelling entertainment events. We are counting on you to make the right decision, the humane choice.