THE EXECUTIVE POLICY COMMITTEE-JANUARY 16, 2013

Re: Comprehensive Strategy to Enhance the Protection of Our Urban Forest from Dutch Elm Disease.

Good Morning;

I am here on behalf of the membership of TAG, Trees Action Group, a coalition of concerned citizens who have come together to draw public and municipal attention to the imminent crisis facing our beloved Elm canopy.

Over the course of the past year, we have met with you, individually and collectively to discuss what needs to be done to meet this crisis head on. Thanks to our work and the work of the Standing Committee on Infrastructure Renewal and Public Works, especially Martha Barwinsky and David Domke, and with the support of this committee we now have a strategic management plan.

We appreciate the work done by all in this regard and whole-heartedly support the motion passed by the Public Works Committee that this new strategy **be de-linked from provincial funding**. We urge this committee to support this motion. To do otherwise not only threatens the catastrophic collapse of our urban forest, already in crisis, it all but guarantees, an ever increasing debt of millions of dollars for the removal of diseased and dying trees. It is imperative that the city finds a way to implement the **Enhanced Strategic Plan** without relying on provincial funding to do so.

In 1997, the DED Action Plan stated that if monies for DED were reduced allowing for a doubling of elm tree loss the result would be catastrophic and Manitobans would be faced with a $25 million tree removal bill, a $28 million bill for replacement, and a significant decline in real estate values. We had 190.000 Elms in 1997 and a loss rate of 4.24 %.

Today we have 140,000, and a loss rate of 3.8%. This is a worrying trend that if left unchecked, will result in the disappearance of over three quarters of Winnipeg's mature Elm trees within the next 15 to 18 years. The estimated cost in today's numbers if we do not keep our loss rate at 2%, is $100 million dollars over the next ten years.

The crisis facing us is real and the consequences devastating, and as we have shown in our past presentations, those cities in North America, who did not heed the warning, lost the battle. When a loss rate of 2% was not maintained losses spiraled to a devastating 18%. Winnipeg is at such a tipping point.

The Enhanced Strategic Plan **is the only option** capable of reducing the loss rates to 2%. It is a small price to pay for an asset worth almost **$1 billion!** We will not save all our trees but we can ensure that Winnipeg has an Elm canopy for years to come. We will do our part to lobby the Provincial Government to reinstate the all-important buffer zones, the lack of which is tantamount to opening a hole in an already leaking dike.

We ask that the city **initiate formal discussions** with the province of Manitoba to work together to both **1) reinstate the buffer zone** and **2) participate in cost sharing** while implementing the DED management strategy, while also **3) supporting the Public Works Committee motion to delink this strategy from provincial funding.**

Let's continue to work together to ensure that the city that prides itself as having the largest urban forest in the World, continues to do so.

Thank you.