Executive Policy Committee
July 10, 2013

Submitted by: Elizabeth LaBelle
Citizens Helping to End the Cat Crisis

Good morning His Worship Mayor Katz, Councillors, delegations, media and members of the public.

My name is Elizabeth LaBelle. I am here with my colleague, James Webb to speak on behalf of our advocacy group, Citizens Helping to End the Cat Crisis. Our group was created out of public concern for the cats in Winnipeg affected by the cat over population crisis.

We have spoken at the last two meeting of the Standing Policy Committee on Protection and Community Services regarding the Cat Licensing Program which is outlined in the proposed Responsible Pet Ownership By-law. We proposed that the above committee adopt and write into the by-law, the implementation of a self-funding, high volume, low cost spay and neuter clinic based on the business and operational Humane Alliance Model. At the July 4th meeting, councillors on the committee expressed an interest in our proposed solution to cat overpopulation in Winnipeg. The rescheduling of this meeting from September to July did not allow us the time to present further documentation supporting our proposal. We would appreciate the opportunity to do so.

We are here today to ask the councillors on the Executive Policy Committee to do likewise since the Cat Licensing Program still does not have a concrete plan for spay and neutering. I would like to point out that if the implementation of such a clinic were approved, there is help and support provided by the Humane Alliance organization. Their National Spay/Neuter Response Team is strategic training program which addresses the urgent need for a skilled and well-organized mentor to help guide other organizations in the self-sustaining operation of a high volume, low cost spay/neuter clinic. Mr. Leland Gordon, with his workload as Chief Operating Officer of Animal Services, would not be expected to be involved in the day to day running of a clinic. A manager could be appointed to do this work.

All stakeholders in the cat overpopulation issue would agree that spaying and neutering is the answer to cat overpopulation. Currently we have cats spayed and neutered rescue organizations before they leave the shelter or foster home for adopotion. However, there are only so many spaces that these rescues have to take in cats regardless of how much money they receive from fundraising, donations etc. A mobile vet service has helped spay/neuter dogs and cats, in particular in remote areas. To use this service, rescues need to fundraise to pay for spay/neuter procedures or receive the funds from a fundraising group. The Winnipeg Humane Society has a spay/neuter program for low income pet owners. In Appendix B of draft by-law, it states that in the service agreement between the WHS and the City, the WHS receives $20 per cat spay and neuter up to a maximum of $75,000. However the maximum requested/earned by the WHS per the contract for their

Cat Spay and Neuter Program was only $51,220 in 2012. The WHS has stated repeatedly that it did 6,000 spay/neuters in 2012. However the numbers would indicate that only 2,056 cats were done which were low cost to the public. Also since the maximum amount of subsidized funds provided by the City was not used, then would providing more funding to this program be the answer. In summation, all of the spay and neutering performed by the above mentioned organizations is not high volume, nor self-funding. A City operated high volume, low cost spay/neuter clinic, accessible also to the public regardless of income, would be seen as an accountable and verifiable solution to cat overpopulation.

In closing, I would like to point out it is the City's responsibility and not the private sector to set up such a clinic. The fact that the City has an animal services agency is an admission of responsibility. The fact that a Responsible Pet Ownership By-law is being drafted would also indicate the same. Councillors have a responsibility to the voters who elected him or her. Companion animals are immensely important to the citizens of Winnipeg who care very deeply for them. Many citizens also care for feral and stray cats. Citizens entrust our politicians to develop animal services programs that build on that deep care and concern.

Thank you for your time.