Submission from:
Dave Mouland
2016 City of Winnipeg Operating Budget
Executive Policy Committee
March 15, 2016

Mayor Bowman, Councillors, ladies and gentlemen,

My name is Dave Mouland. I own my own home and pay property taxes and the frontage levy at 1609 Pacific Avenue.

Well, another year, another budget.

Higher taxes for all, funds being transferred from one department to another --A perfect shell game. No wonder the Red River Exhibition keeps on coming back.

All of this so that all of us who live within city limits have no way of knowing how much each department received, or spent, or went over budget.

Isn't this gobbledegook language wonderful for these situations? No one can speak it and no one can understand a thing that has been said; perfect for a budget.

The sacred cow every year seems to be the police department. It has been reported for several years that the crime rate has gone down, yet the budget keeps on going up. So that, combined with the fire and paramedics, over 44 per cent of the entire budget goes to these two departments. It has been reported over the last few days that there may be some layoffs, as many as 80-plus. This has not happened yet. This may well be a case of too little, too late anyway.

If this were to happen to a family living in Winnipeg, the family would be making cuts across the board, including to any sacred cows they may have. The amounts over budget to refurbish the old post office building into the new main police station is a classic of this type of taxpayer abuse. If a contract is signed, then that is it. I do not know of anybody who is able to break a contract without serious consequences.

If this overspending were stopped, there would be more than enough money to build a permanent cover over the sidewalk to protect pedestrians from falling rocks. How is it possible that the old cop shop, barely 50 years old, is condemned to the wrecker's ball? Where I come from (Great Britain) there are thousands of buildings in use today that are 1,000 or more years old and still used 24/7.

I should also mention at this time, there is too much incompetence going on with the building of fire halls, by developers who have not done due diligence as to who owns the land and what it is zoned for. A simple phone call to the land titles office, would solve much of this problem .This one phone call has to be cheaper than the mess we have now

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When I have a look at this year's budget, 2016, there are over 100 departments and almost all of them have increased taxes or user fees. I would at this time like to mention that a user fee by any other name is still a tax.

The money to pay these taxes comes from that same money tree that we all have growing in our backyards. This money raised is used to pay for essential services within the perimeter. Where does all this money go? And yet every year it is the same thing, give me more, more, more, for less. The money tree has long been used up

The increase in the frontage levy is another bone of contention in that everyone pays the same rate. If the value of the building is vastly different on each property, then the monetary worth of the property has to change, along with the frontage levy fees or any other property-only fees or taxes. A lot with a building, no matter how rundown, has to be worth more than a vacant lot with no essential services hooked up. Many homeowners with expensive houses in the suburbs pay lower frontage fees than low-income homeowners in the inner city, because their lots are shaped like pie wedges. But both owners will pay the same rate per foot on the frontage fee levy. It just doesn't seem right to me.

One final word on the budget process: There should never be a situation in any budget for the transfer of funds from one department to another, just to make both departments look good. If the department comes in under budget two years in a row, then the fees to that department should be lowered to the level where the department is just breaking even. In the event that this department has a crisis event during this time, the money for this situation should be taken from general revenue and the rate for that department adjusted at the next budget.

I have one more issue I would like to raise. I can only speak for myself, but on garbage day pickup, we all take our bins to the back lane and drag them back after they have been emptied except for one property in each block with a front street driveway. These properties take their bins to the edge of the front street. This means that the pickup guys have to pickup the same street twice all for one property in each block. I can only hope this is not happening in other areas. Where it is happening, it should be stopped immediately. Money saved could be used elsewhere, or better still, returned to the taxpayer.