

Questions & Answers from the Mayoral Candidates About Downtown Issues

Mayoral Candidates: Judy Wasylycia-Leis and Sam Katz

- 1. An economically growing, competitive and environmentally sustainable downtown is one that is a hub for green transportation, with strategies that integrate automobile, transit (LRT, BRT, streetcars and other), cycle and pedestrian travel.**
 - a. Do you agree with this statement and if so, would you lead the creation of a long-term financial plan and capital program to get us there, making this a priority in discussions with all levels of government, and how?**

JUDY:

If Winnipeg is to keep pace with other urban centres with a vision for a vibrant downtown core with appropriate levels of density, then we need to get moving on rapid transit. We've delayed construction of a rapid-transit system again and again, and one of my first commitments in this election was to end the delays and get the first leg of a bus rapid transit system completed and operational within my first term as mayor. Within the next five years there is no reason not to have the first rapid-transit line completed and the second one under construction, but we'll have neither without the political will to finally make it happen. The simple fact is that we've been debating rapid transit in this city since City Council voted on a subway plan back in 1959. It's now 50 years later and we've delayed it yet again. My administration will finish the rapid-transit first line, start on the second, and get back to the discussion we need to have about a fully-integrated transportation strategy that meets the current and future needs of our city. An integrated green-transportation plan is essential to our city's economic future, it's essential to building a stronger downtown, and it's essential to creating the kind of vibrancy we need to keep our young people here and attract investment. I've been clear that we need to identify both near-term goals and long-term plans when it comes to a transportation strategy, and I have committed to rebuilding relations with the province and Ottawa to generate the future-focused partnerships Winnipeg will need to build a transportation network for the 21st century.

SAM:

- I wholeheartedly agree with this statement and, in fact, I have worked with City Council and have already taken action in this regard. At its July meeting, Council adopted a Sustainable Transportation Direction Strategy, which was developed in consultation with the community through the OurWinnipeg process.
- This strategy provides high-level goals and action items which will guide the preparation of a detailed Transportation Master Plan for a sustainable transportation system that accommodates motor vehicles, all forms of transit, and active transportation (including pedestrians and cyclists).
- Work on this Transportation Master Plan is currently underway, and the finalized Plan will be presented for Council consideration in early 2011. I should also add that, should it be approved by Council, it will be the first time in the history of Unicity where we will have a Council-adopted transportation plan.
- As you have noted, the issue of infrastructure funding is always a significant one. Since I became Mayor in 2004, the City of Winnipeg has increased its capital

- This is no small feat for the level of government that has the least ability to generate revenue. When adjusted for inter-governmental transfers and equalization payments, the City only receives 7.3 cents of every tax dollar collected (the Province receives 64.9 cents, and the federal government receives 27.8 cents). This current distribution is inadequate to meet the very real cost of addressing our infrastructure deficit - \$3.8 billion over the next 10 years, just to address renewal, replacement and reconstruction of our existing infrastructure alone.
- While I have had great success in my 6 years as Mayor in negotiating specific funding agreements with the other levels of government – for instance, convincing the federal government to allow the City to use its share of the federal gas tax money for roads and bridges – continually dealing with significant infrastructure and operating issues on an one-off basis does not permit long-term planning or certainty.
- Indeed, a long-term, sustainable solution to fix our crumbling infrastructure is required. That is why the Association of Manitoba Municipalities and the City of Winnipeg recently created an Infrastructure Funding Council (IFC), with a mandate to examine funding options – both those that municipalities can control, and those that require assistance from the federal and provincial governments – to address our significant infrastructure deficit. The recommendations of the IFC (Chris Lorenc, Reg Alcock, Jill Vogan, Mike O’Shaughnessy, Ron Bell, Cory Young) will be brought forward for the consideration of Council and the AMM in late 2010.
- I look forward to reviewing the IFC recommendations, and can assure you that all options will be considered.

2. A healthy and appealing downtown is one that includes regular and festive events, which in turn create community pride, another reason for people to come downtown, and potential economic development opportunities. This will require city street closures. The City is a partner in building our community both socially and economically, and subsequently needs to continue in partnering with downtown event organizers.

a. Do you agree with this statement, and if so will your City Hall demonstrate downtown is an event-friendly neighbourhood by allocating resources to Public Works to regularly close streets for events?

SAM:

- I was fortunate to be able to attend the recent Lights on Broadway competition, which was held just a few weeks ago in conjunction with the very successful Ciclovía event. I was able to see first-hand the positive impact that events such as these have on the downtown, and on the morale and pride of the citizens of Winnipeg.
- I would like to commend the Downtown BIZ for their efforts in ensuring that exciting, popular events that showcase all that Winnipeg has to offer continue to be a growing success in our city, and I am pleased that the City is able to partner

- The City of Winnipeg annually allocates resources for street closures in the Public Works budget. In 2010, the budget line for street closures was \$47,000.

JUDY:

Yes, and I have already announced my support for “community corridors” that engage downtown businesses and renew our focus on downtown as a safe, vibrant, inclusive destination for festivals and events. We can use the natural architectural anchors we already have in our downtown to create more options for downtown markets, events, walking and cycling corridors, and I’ve announced in this campaign my intention to work with businesses and community stakeholders to create the city’s first pedestrian mall. It’s imperative that we create opportunities for Winnipeggers across the city to enjoy and celebrate their downtown, and it’s my view that City Hall must play a leading role in championing a strong downtown.

3. **A fully revitalized and vibrant downtown is one which is planned, district by district, each unique from one another. Proper development tools need to be in place to assist the private sector in dealing with economic challenges of developing and redeveloping properties downtown.**
 - a. **Do you agree with this statement, and if so will you provide the Planning Department / CentreVenture the resources required to create proper private sector-driven development plans, for each downtown district?**
 - b. **Will you support the City providing tax increment financing or other fiscal tools to address the economic gap challenge, and how?**

JUDY:

Winnipeg is fortunate to have some of the best-recognized planners, urban thinkers, planning advocates and green-minded architects in the country. It’s my view that we need to do a better job embracing their insight and expertise in the Mayor’s office, and I think we only shortchange our city when we ignore the tremendous wealth of knowledge we already have right at our fingertips. TIF and other tools provide us with some tremendous opportunities to drive proper development in our downtown, and if we have a City Hall willing to show real leadership on downtown rejuvenation, we can generate some positive momentum very quickly in terms of real, lasting renewal. We’re fortunate to have private-sector partners ready to invest in our downtown, but their interest needs to be met with leadership and forward vision from the Mayor’s office. I’m tremendously excited by what we can achieve in our downtown over the next 5-10 years, and as Mayor I pledge to do all I can to make that happen.

SAM:

- I wholeheartedly agree with this statement and, in fact, working with Council, I have already taken action in this regard. In July, Council endorsed the Portage Avenue Action Plan developed by CentreVenture Development Corporation and the Downtown Council (of which the Downtown BIZ is a member). This Action Plan divides the downtown into four unique districts – the University District, the Retail District, the Commercial District, and the Sports, Hospitality and Entertainment District.

- The first phase – the creation of the Sports, Hospitality and Entertainment District – is already in the implementation stage (a master plan is being created for the area), and the City is currently working with the Province to ensure that all incremental municipal property taxes and education taxes generated in this District can be used to fund the implementation of the remainder of the Action Plan. I am truly excited to see this exciting initiative come to fruition.

4. The image of our city is judged by the physical appearance of our downtown. Its appearance sends either positive or negative economic signals to the tourists and investors from around the world, who visit our downtown.

- a. Do you agree with this statement, and if so will you address the infrastructure deficit in the downtown much more quickly than any other neighbourhood, e.g. sidewalks, roads, curbs, garbage cans, etc., and how?**

SAM:

- The downtown of any major North American city is indeed often the standard by which a whole city is judged. I have worked hard as Mayor to ensure that the infrastructure of our entire city is being addressed and we have seen an investment of over 450% in our entire city's infrastructure since I've become Mayor.
- We need to find a balance between the needs of the downtown and the rest of the City which also deserves a high quality level of service. I want to thank the members of the Downtown BIZ who have certainly played a major and important role in keeping our downtown welcoming and inviting to tourists and investors. We all have a role to play in ensuring our downtown is successful because the health of our downtown reflects on the health of our entire city.
- In 2007, I worked with council to increase investment in our downtown infrastructure. This included an investment of over \$8 million dollars in streets maintenance services which included street and sidewalk flushing downtown, 7 day litter container pick-up downtown, and the removal of the resulting snow piles on boulevards created from street snow clearing operations which have acted as a barrier and posed potential hazards to motorists, cyclists, and pedestrians alike.
- I will continue to work with Council to ensure all our communities are benefitting from our investments in addressing our infrastructure deficit.

JUDY: The simple answer is that we need both. The signs of Winnipeg's soaring infrastructure deficit are evident everywhere from the very centre of our city to our residential streets and back lanes. But the critical issue is this: we're not going to get a handle on fixing this infrastructure mess until we have an actual plan at City Hall. We're fortunate to have some provincial funding for infrastructure projects over the next several years, but it's not a substitute for a renewal strategy. I've put a clear plan on the table to end the neglect of our crumbling city and finally begin to reinvest in our communities. I've been transparent and upfront with Winnipeggers about exactly what this will cost them (approximately \$2 more per month for an average family), and those dollars will be targeted directly toward infrastructure, public places and policing. I regret that Sam Katz still won't tell Winnipeggers what he plans to do on the issue of property taxes, which is

troubling to me because our city has a projected deficit of \$80 million for the next fiscal year alone. Unless we deal with it we're only going to set the city back further in terms of having the resources to reinvest in our downtown, or in any part of our city. Allowing our city to crumble further will only hamper investment and increase the size of the repair bill. I've put a clear plan on the table to start reinvesting in our infrastructure, and I challenge all candidates in this race to be transparent about what they would do to ensure we ignore this problem no longer.

5. The prevalent social issues of panhandling, homelessness and general poverty make it difficult for many Winnipeggers to embrace their downtown. As a result there is a strong perception that downtown is unsafe, creating a negative image for our city.

a. Do you agree with this statement, and if so what will you support / do to make it more comfortable for Winnipeggers to come downtown, from a safety perspective? And if that does not work, what else will you do?

JUDY:

There are two things: First, we need to stop pretending this problem will go away on its own. It won't. Fortunately, we have options. Cities like Edmonton and Ottawa have faced similar challenges and responded with a comprehensive plan to address these issues at the root with clear goals and timelines. There's no reason for Winnipeg not to do the same, and I've offered clear ideas in this election to provide the kinds of supports and resources that directly address social challenges like these that not only contribute to alienation and crime, but make our downtown appear uninviting. But second, we need a City Hall willing to once again renew efforts to encourage Winnipeggers across the city to celebrate their downtown. There's nothing that creates a sense of safety, vibrancy, inclusion and civic pride than bustling sidewalks full of people. The short of it is that our downtown businesses can't do this alone. They need the support of the Mayor and City Hall, and it's my commitment to our downtown businesses to being a full partner in both investing in our downtown, but also promoting it both inside and outside the city as an appealing destination.

SAM:

- Downtown safety – and, in fact, safety in all areas of our City – is a significant issue, and one that we have worked hard to address. As you have noted, both aggressive panhandling and public intoxication contribute to the negative perception that many Winnipeggers have about downtown safety, and that is a perception that can be changed with all stakeholders working together.
- Under my leadership, in 2005 Council passed a new aggressive panhandling by-law, which prohibits panhandling at bus stops, bank machines, elevators, public pay phones, outdoor patios – anywhere citizens are a captive audience. Of course, ensuring we have the necessary resources to effectively enforce our by-laws is always an issue.
- That is why the City has implemented a new cadet program – the first class of cadets started their training just last week – which will allow for more “feet on the streets” to address issues such as panhandling, and will allow our police officers to focus on the more serious crimes being committed.

- As well, the Winnipeg Police Service and the Winnipeg Fire Paramedic Service provide support to the Downtown BIZ Outreach Patrol, which assists the City's emergency services providers by ensuring that intoxicated persons are transported to the Main Street Project to receive the attention they require, rather than allowing them to remain on the streets. This is a very important initiative, and I would like to thank the Downtown BIZ for their efforts in this regard.
- But we must also look to a long-term solution, involving all stakeholders, as it is clear that we cannot simply police ourselves out of these social issues. The Winnipeg Police Service, together with partners that include, the Province of Manitoba, the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority, and social service providers, have implemented a successful program called Project Breakaway, which focuses on identifying individuals who have been detained under the Intoxicated Persons Detention Act more than ten times in one year, and assisting them in breaking away from the streets and moving to healthier, more productive lifestyles.
- And the City supports CentreVenture's efforts through the implementation of the Portage Avenue Action Plan to work with the Manitoba Liquor Control Commission to address the issue of downtown establishments that contribute to the alcohol problem.
- We must build on these existing initiatives and work in partnership with all levels of government, as well as community, business and faith based organizations, if we are to make real strides in addressing crime and safety in the downtown.

6. It's time to end the social despair of those less fortunate who on a daily basis panhandle downtown. Some then purchase and over consume alcohol; others inhale intoxicants, then "scare" the public and get arrested by the police or BIZ Outreach Patrols. These people are then released, only to do it all over again. What is your plan to address these issues over the next decade?

SAM:

- As previously indicated, we must look to a long-term solution to address poverty and the root causes of crime. That is why in 2008, City Council unanimously adopted LiveSAFE, a comprehensive crime prevention strategy.
- The strategy involves a partnership with all three levels of government, community organizations, educational institutions and the private sector – these issues cannot be solved by any one group alone, and it is critical that each of these stakeholders take leadership on addressing the issues that fall within their jurisdiction.
- And while some may believe the City has no role to play in addressing poverty, I can assure you that this is one of the most critical issues that we face as Winnipeggers, and your civic government is doing its part to address it.
- Under my leadership, the City has taken action on social issues such as:
 - affordable housing – Council added an annual budget line that provides a guaranteed \$1 million each and every year for affordable housing projects under the Winnipeg Housing and Homelessness Initiative.
 - positive alternatives for at-risk youth – increased recreational and mentorship opportunities (inner city programming has increased by 4,729 hours, which provides over 21,000 inner city children with additional recreational activities in which to participate)

- training and employment opportunities for aboriginal youth - an Aboriginal Youth Strategy was launched, which has resulted in over 750 Aboriginal young people participating in programs that involve recreation, training and employment skills. To date, 317 aboriginal youth have completed training programs, 58 received jobs, and 38 have returned to school. Phase 2 of the program, which started this year, focuses on the City of Winnipeg providing jobs and training opportunities for Aboriginal youth within the municipal public service.
- These significant initiatives have laid the groundwork for the next four years, as the City must build upon its successes to ensure a high quality of life for all of our citizens. And when we can provide our youth with increased alternatives and opportunities, we are making the biggest strides in breaking the cycle of poverty before it can negatively impact future generations.

JUDY:

This is a chronic challenge, and it's something business owners have raised with me again and again. I've announced support for increased policing because I believe we need to strengthen enforcement, but I also know that more enforcement alone won't fix the problem. In the short term, we need more supports to divert people in need away from downtown streets and instead toward the resources that address their needs, and in the longer term, an actual plan of attack like we've seen in places like Ottawa and Edmonton. Those cities have shown genuine leadership by building long-term strategies to address the root causes of poverty, and the experiences there show that having a meaningful strategy really does make a difference.

7. World class public institutions make our city a desirable place to live and enhance our competitiveness.

a. Do you agree with this statement and if so if elected (re-elected) Mayor, will you be an advocate for, and apply fair fiscal priority, to:

- An expanded Convention Centre
- An expanded Art Gallery
- An expanded Concert Hall and Manitoba Museum
- Expanded education and learning facilities
- Other

JUDY:

Big-vision projects get done in Winnipeg when we have strong leadership at City Hall. That's been the case with everything from redeveloping The Forks to the Red River campus on Princess to the MTS Centre. These types of projects get done when our civic leaders can directly engage external funders and other levels of government to drive investment to our city to make these kinds of projects a reality. Strong leadership at City Hall is equally needed when we look at existing facilities in need of renewal and reinvestment. Right now the relationship between City Hall and other levels of government is strained because of policy flip-flops on issues like funding for rapid transit, and it's my commitment to rebuild those partnerships with Ottawa and the province. Those relationships are absolutely vital to driving the investment we need to expand or renew existing facilities, or to pursue new projects. As one example, the Winnipeg Partnership Agreement is expiring, and there are no plans at City Hall to renew it. The

discussions to negotiate a new tri-partite funding deal for Winnipeg will begin immediately if I am elected.

SAM:

- I do agree with the statement that world class public institutions make our city a desirable place to live and enhance our competitiveness; that is why, under my leadership, the City has supported significant projects such as the Canadian Museum for Human Rights, the expansion of the Red River College Campus to the Union Bank Tower, and the University of Winnipeg's Spence Street Pedestrian Mall.
- In addition, the City is the only level of government to commit to an expanded Winnipeg Convention Centre by setting aside up to 40% of the annual revenue from the City's accommodation tax.
- However, as previously indicated the City of Winnipeg is the level of government that receives the least amount of taxation revenue – when adjusted for inter-governmental transfers and equalization payments, the City receives only 7.3 cents of every tax dollar, while the Province receives 64.9 cents, and the federal government receives 27.8 cents.
- As a result, financial realities dictate that the City cannot participate in every expansion project and the decision of whether the City is able to provide financial support must be made on a case-by-case basis.
- However, even when there is no direct financial role for the City, there are other ways that the City may be able to support these exciting initiatives, most often through the provision of land or in-kind services.

8. Downtown retail recruitment is increasingly becoming a tool downtown agencies use to develop a stronger retail fabric for their downtown—just as shopping mall managers do. This often includes government addressing market challenges by providing the proper financial tools to the private sector.

a. Do you agree with this statement, and if so downtown stakeholders have developed a Downtown Retail Recruitment Strategy. Will you support this strategy?

SAM:

- I would like to commend the Downtown BIZ for demonstrating leadership on this very important issue, and spearheading the preparation of a Downtown Retail Recruitment Strategy.
- There are some great ideas in this plan, but we need a coordinated effort with all of our stakeholders to ensure a united approach. If I am re-elected in October, I can commit to you that I will call a Council Seminar within the first 30 days, so that all councillors can receive a presentation from the BIZ on the details and recommendations contained in the Strategy – as well as how this Strategy fits with the Portage Avenue Action Plan prepared by CentreVenture and the Downtown Council - and have a discussion on how the City can best support the private sector in this regard.

JUDY:

It's my view that this strategy reflects the leadership our downtown stakeholders have shown on the issue of downtown revitalization, and the downtown business community will have my support on this.

9. A mature city follows the best practices associated with creating a current and dynamic parking system for its downtown. In recent years the city has evolved downtown parking to levels where best practices are slowly being achieved, particularly its inclusive direction and new approaches.

- a. Do you agree with this statement, and if so what will you do to ensure that the parking authority remains vital, active and publicly accountable through citizens and stakeholders overseeing and approving all aspects of its planning, actions operations facilities and budgets, with final authority only residing with Mayor and Council.**

JUDY:

As I've said on the campaign trail, we have tremendous proposals on the table with regard to parking-related infrastructure that increase opportunities for street-level retail and contribute to a sense of urban cohesion. It's imperative that we move in the direction of best practices when it comes to a parking strategy that contributes directly to strengthening vibrancy and filling in the gaps -- both figuratively and literally -- when it comes to our downtown.

SAM:

- Downtown parking requirements is a major issue in redeveloping our downtown as parking can have a significant impact on the viability of the downtown as a thriving business location. The Winnipeg Parking Authority has recognized the importance of stakeholder consultation, and meets regularly with a stakeholder advisory group – of which the Downtown BIZ is a member - to discuss parking issues that impact their business or community interests.
- In addition, the Winnipeg Parking Authority's business plan is annually approved by Council, with the opportunity for the public to provide their comments and questions for Council consideration.
- As you know, the Winnipeg Parking Authority is in the process of completing a Downtown Parking Strategy – which involved significant consultation with stakeholders, including the Downtown BIZ. This Strategy will come forward for Council consideration in the upcoming months, and I look forward to having a dialogue around the opportunities it presents, as we move forward on this important issue.

10. How will Winnipeg's two newest proposed developments impact the downtown? The Seasons of Tuxedo, which will be anchored by a 350,000-square-foot IKEA store at the southwest corner of Sterling Lyon Parkway and Kenaston Boulevard, and The Elms, a 650,000-square-foot Polo Park?

SAM:

- While the global economy has faced uncertainty in recent times, we have created the conditions necessary to see major retail investments being made right here in Winnipeg.
- With Winnipeg becoming a major shopping destination, I believe the trickle down effect for other existing retail businesses will be positive as more and more people choose to shop Winnipeg.
- With the major IKEA investment, we will attract more visitors to Winnipeg from the U.S., Saskatchewan, and Northern Ontario, who otherwise would have spent their money south of the border or in other Canadian cities.
- This will have a positive residual effect on all other businesses in Winnipeg as visitors stay, play, and spend money here and look to enjoy the entire Winnipeg experience.
- By ensuring Winnipeg is open to attracting new business, we will all benefit by expanding our tax base, and attracting new visitors and consumers who will enjoy all our city has to offer.

JUDY:

Many Winnipeggers are rightfully excited about the IKEA project in particular, but it's important that we also don't lose sight of the fact that any economically prosperous urban centre needs a strong downtown. The Mayor must play a central role in ensuring the downtown is seen as an attractive place to invest.