

TESTIMONY OF THE QCC BEFORE THE NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL BUDGET HEARINGS

The Queens Civic Congress' Testimony before the New York City Council regarding the Budget of the City of New York, May 17, 1999

Deputy Majority Leader Spigner and fellow members of the City Council, thank you for giving me the opportunity to address you on the issue of the New York City Budget. My name is Sean M. Walsh; I am President of the Queens Civic Congress an umbrella organization of ninety two civic organizations in Queens County.

The number one topic of Queens civics in 1999 is Education. The recent controversy over the allocation of capital monies for new classroom seats illustrates the need for increased funding for education in our city. In addition, there is a need to bring class sizes down and restore music and art programs. Schools must be opened at night for youth programs to keep our children off the street. Keeping an after school program open is cheaper than building jail cells. Likewise the library budget must be increased. The elimination of coal burning heating systems in our schools should be expedited.

The New York City Police Department has consistently decreased the number of uniformed patrol strength in Queens. Queens gets 19% of the NYPD's uniform man power while it has 25% of the reported city wide crime. Queens again this year has the highest response times in the city. We believe that the budget discussions should address this disparity of manpower allocation. Police visibility is an important element of any crime prevention program.

We ask the Council to move the legislative agenda of the Borough President and the Queens Civic Congress on additional improvements in the City Administrative Code to combat illegal conversions and illegal construction.

The recent rejection of Community Board 11's 197A Plan by the City Planning Commission is a signal that the CPC is seeking large scale developments along all of the Queens' east west thoroughfares. You must stand firm against this overdevelopment plan.

The Congress reiterates its opposition to the Van Wyck portion of the Airtain to JFK and opposes the MTA's proposed routes to LaGuardia as being destructive of the communities through which they will pass. We have suggested alternatives for both airports that *will* provide a one seat ride to Manhattan from both airports.

Water rates are out of reach of single family homeowners, the coops, and the small businessman. Capital costs must be removed from the calculation of the water rate. In no other portion of the city budgeting process are capital items funded by a regressive use tax. In addition why are rates increased prior to the determination of agency expenses.

Again, I want to thank you and I am looking forward to working with you during the budget process.