



## Article: "Why I Am Running In Winnipeg North"

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**October 9, 2004**

### **Roger Poisson Writes to the Media: "Why I Am Running In Winnipeg North"**

First, I want you to learn from me that I am a father, and I love you. Some people have asked me, "Why do you want to get involved with those guys? They're so tough." To me, it's not about 'winning' but because I am here for the people.

Every young person makes mistakes. Their mothers feel sorry for them, but at the same time, they are forced to take their kids to the police, hoping they will change their lives. Now in the North end, there is a lot of force, on both sides. Arrests and violence happen all the time. That's enough of this! I understand why arrests have to be made. But we must get out of this cycle. Why can't we teach the young to be loved, to learn and to go to school, because someone believes in them like a father?

Many years ago, I saw the stealing, the killing, and the drugs. I saw that it was impossible for the young in the North to be like other people. I remember being shocked by a young boy who told me a story from his life. He had really wished for a new jacket – something like he'd seen on T.V. He worked for it and looked forward to looking like a rich kid. He finally got the jacket. The next thing he knew was that he was going to be beaten up for his new jacket by a gang of kids. He was so scared. Of course he handed his jacket over.

There are so many stories like this. It means that the young can't dream at all. That boy can only be with a powerful person for protection, or become a powerful person himself. The kids soon see that it is better to be powerful than to be laughed at, beaten up or killed. They had to prove they were strong. Then it became the drugs, the beer and the guns that would prove that they were strong. So, do you think these young look terrible? They're forced to do what they are told or they're out the door.

I'm not saying that we should protect those who have become the bullies. Not at all. I am saying that we need to understand that the young have to survive or they will lose everything, even their lives.

I learn from the young, no matter what they have done, and I love them. One day, they will realize that a father is there to help them change their lives. They will be able to change because they will feel their worth, because a father loves them.



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Last night, a young Native man from the North end, who has been in and out of youth centres and gaols, came to see me. He said to me, “Roger, I know that you have always been there for me, even when I was a little kid, you protected me as a little boy. I know that you still love me, even though I’m weak and get into trouble.”

You see, I wish to save the young and have them know that I love them. I want them to know that I love them from the heart and that their lives can change because I love them and believe in them. Never forget that after these kids have been arrested for stealing, mugging, or whatever, no one trusts them anymore, because they made such mistakes. I want the police to understand that I don’t agree at all with the crimes and believe they must be dealt with.

But, for example, when a young person is not allowed to drive a car ever again because he stole a car, you condemn him to steal more often. He feels that he can never drive again anyhow, so why not continue to steal what he can’t have.

It is impossible for these kids to learn they can be trusted. It’s hard for them to work for anyone because they stole in the past. Work begins to mean nothing and the kids become poorer. They feel they will never be trusted, so stealing and drugs become more attractive. They can dream again. But the dreams are not good dreams. They dream of impressing others, of being powerful.

We must listen to the young...

*“How can I know what you say is true?”*

*“You people don’t give a damn!”*

*“My father is just too tough!”*

*“You say that Canada can be better. Prove this to me!”*

It’s time to wake up Canada! Don’t you think these kids want to marry, have a home, raise a family and be happy? They will work hard when a father loves them and is a real father to them. That’s why I’m here. They made mistakes but I know they will change, even if today they look terrible.

Some adults in the North end are losing their jobs now. Anxiety is growing. Some are feeling that they might lose everything they had built from the dreams they had once had. Don’t forget that the young are going through this all the time. You see this in the eyes of the young girls who believe their guys could one day bring changes for them, and have hope, even though they all made mistakes in the past.

Remember the young Native man who knows that I love him like a son? He said, “I love you Roger. You know that I made mistakes but you are still there for me. You’ve always been close



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to me. Now, there's a girl who loves me and believes in me. Imagine. She believes in me! I want to change my life!"

I say to the young man, and to others, "I'm proud of you, and I love you! I believe in you and I respect you. Come and see me whenever you want."

That's why I'm here in the North end....not to throw them away but to teach them about love and changing their lives. One day, you'll realize how powerful you are in the North. I believe in you. One day, people will say ... 'incredible, the changes in the North!' The toughest people in the North end have changed once before and more will change again.

Your father loves you and always will. I will always be here for you. Come and see me any time.

That's why I am here in Winnipeg North.

**Roger Poisson**

***END***