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## **LGA Cuts – It's Time for Mayor Chris Coleman to do his Job**

**Saint Paul, Minnesota, May 21, 2009** – Saint Paul Mayor Chris Coleman is touring the state today voicing concern for cities like Mankato, Rochester, Albert Lea, Willmar and Alexandria. “I’d like to know why Mayor Chris Coleman’s focus isn’t on the city of Saint Paul at this important time?” asks Eva Ng, candidate for Mayor of Saint Paul. “Instead, he is traveling the state for his own benefit when he should be back in the capitol city, figuring out just how much the city can withstand in Local Government Aid (LGA) cuts. He should be working with Governor Pawlenty to establish an LGA figure that the city can handle, instead of fanning the flames. The cuts are inevitable for everyone and Mayor Coleman’s job is to focus on the priorities for Saint Paul. Now is not the time for Mayor Coleman to take a hiatus from the job he was elected to do,” she continued.

“Furthermore, it is unconscionable that Mayor Coleman keeps threatening the loss of public safety, citing impending cuts in police, fire and EMS. Politicians put these items on the chopping block to get the greatest reaction and outcry and it is simply wrong. Worse yet, if those are truly the first items to get cut, then he is not doing his job for the citizens of Saint Paul. Police, fire, EMS and other essential services are not an LGA responsibility. Those services are Mayor Coleman’s responsibility and the city’s first priority,” said Ng. “That is where citizens expect their tax dollars to be spent. Those items should be funded properly before everything else.”

Ng continued by saying, “Unfortunately, our current Mayor has other priorities. In fact, at the same time he was arguing against LGA cuts, he was also asking for state-loan forgiveness for the city of Saint Paul so he could oversee the building of a new \$31 million hockey rink. Is that the right priority?” she asked.

“And now he appears more worried about the loss of LGA to other cities and is traveling on the taxpayers’ dollars to talk about it,” said Ng. “How is this related to the job we elected him to do? What other city staffers are traveling with him and what’s the additional cost to us? Why are we paying for this? There are serious issues that need to be dealt with in Saint Paul and I want to know why he isn’t here working on it,” she said.

Reductions in LGA have been consistent since 2002. But not everyone is concerned about the loss or reduction of local government aid. That is because many large cities don’t even accept the state aid. Ng asked, “Why hasn’t the Mayor worked to become less reliant on this state aid? If LGA is going to be accepted, then it should only be used for non-essential services or for the many “feel good” and “it would be nice” programs that have become such a large part of our government,” states Ng. “And, if we don’t have the money, then those are the first things that need to get cut.”

“During an economic downturn, a good local leader uses his or her executive skills to balance the budget the people have given him or her to work with. It is time that elected officials like Mayor Coleman looked a little harder for savings,” says Ng. “Maybe instead of cutting police and fire, Mayor Chris Coleman should look at trimming his own staff of 20-30 people (one third of whom are deputies to other positions and special assistants) or look at streamlining operations. He needs to think outside the box, come up with his own ideas instead of always mimicking what Mayor Rybak does in Minneapolis. He is clearly not a man with his own ideas,” states Ng.

When asked what she would do for Saint Paul, she says, “I would look at creating cost efficiencies in the City’s budget. There are many ways to consolidate buying power and stretch the use of existing assets while serving the people of Saint Paul. We can restructure debt, as well as right size or eliminate outdated programs. There are many tools in our arsenal without cutting essential services like fire and police. I would also prioritize a much friendlier business environment in Saint Paul. The growth of businesses in Saint Paul will play a big part in pulling us out of this downward spiral of office space vacancies and negative housing demand. Our city’s population has actually declined 4 to 5% since Mayor Coleman took office. Meanwhile, the city’s budget has grown 25% during his administration. Now, the taxes and fees burden has become heavier on each resident and each business in Saint Paul. Onerous ordinances on housing and re-investment must be reviewed and, if necessary, revised or repealed,” said Ng.

Eva Ng is a businesswoman with 30 years of experience in the private sector, including 10 years of service in Fortune 100 corporations as a trouble-shooter and another 10 years as a turnaround consultant for nearly 20 different small to mid-sized companies. Ng is not a politician and has never aspired to run for office, but says she is ready to put her business insight into service by dealing with the city's financial challenges. Eva is currently the CEO of Blanda, Inc., which has survived and even thrived in a declining US manufacturing environment.

As Mayor Chris Coleman states in his own words ([News Flash](#) on the city's web site), "Property taxpayers and families who depend on essential city services deserve better leadership and political courage...." Eva Ng believes she is the right person to lead Saint Paul in these troubled times.

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