MHRC PRESENTATION FOR THE PUBLIC HEARING ON THE PLAN WINNIPEG AMENDMENT ON JANUARY 4, 2005

For a vibrant city like Winnipeg, population growth and market demand create the need for a diverse range of housing choices. Yet, the strategic planning of residential development creates the need to restrict housing choices so that development remains sustainable. It is the capacity to strike a balance between these apparently competing needs that makes an urban center successful. We need to ensure that there are enough housing options in Winnipeg to satisfy market demand and to prevent population from overflowing into the capital region. This needs to be accomplished, however, by providing options that remain within Plan Winnipeg's vision of vibrant and sustainable urban growth. We believe that the development of Waverly West fulfills both of these goals.

The fact that available housing has diminished significantly in recent years, especially in South Winnipeg, demonstrates the public demand for housing in the south quadrant of the city. The available lots in major communities such as Whyte Ridge, Lindenwoods and Richmond West are depleted. Soon, the available lots in River Park South, Island Lakes and Royalwood will also be depleted. There is a demand for housing in South Winnipeg and if no major new housing options are made available in this area by 2006, buyers will increasingly look at other options – including living in the capital region just south of the city.

Opponents might suggest that this demand can be filled elsewhere in the Winnipeg market, within existing established communities. The supply of available lots in existing communities will not meet the projected demand, however, and this means that buyers will increasingly consider housing in the Capital region. The probability of greater land consumption in the Capital Region is increased proportionately with a lack of housing options in all sectors of Winnipeg. A shift of new home construction outside of Winnipeg has several negative consequences, including population sprawl and a much less sustainable housing environment. Further, as more people choose to commute from bedroom communities Winnipeg's tax base will become eroded but demands on the city's infrastructure will continue to increase.

Over the past two years considerable information has been gathered and many background studies have been prepared concerning the development of Waverly West. The studies show that there will be a demand for 3,000 new housing units in Winnipeg each year for the next several years. Further, such demand is not entirely dependent on population growth but is considerably related to the more predictable (North American wide) trend towards smaller households. The studies also conclude that Winnipeg is not well suited to supply this future demand and that there is a city wide shortage of approved residential lots. The shortages are most apparent in the south of Winnipeg, with the southwest running out of supply in the coming months of this year and with the southeast depleting by the end of next year. Without Waverly West, it is highly probable that Winnipeg will not be able to supply its housing demand in the coming years. Even if that demand could be met in pre-existing communities (and it does not appear that it can) residents who desire to live in the south for proximity to work or school are likely to live just outside the perimeter rather than across the city.

Waverly West represents a logical continuation to the development of southwest Winnipeg. With infrastructure capacity already in place on its edge, the advantages of proceeding with the timely development of Waverly West seem rather evident.

MHRC therefore fully supports the Plan Winnipeg Amendment.